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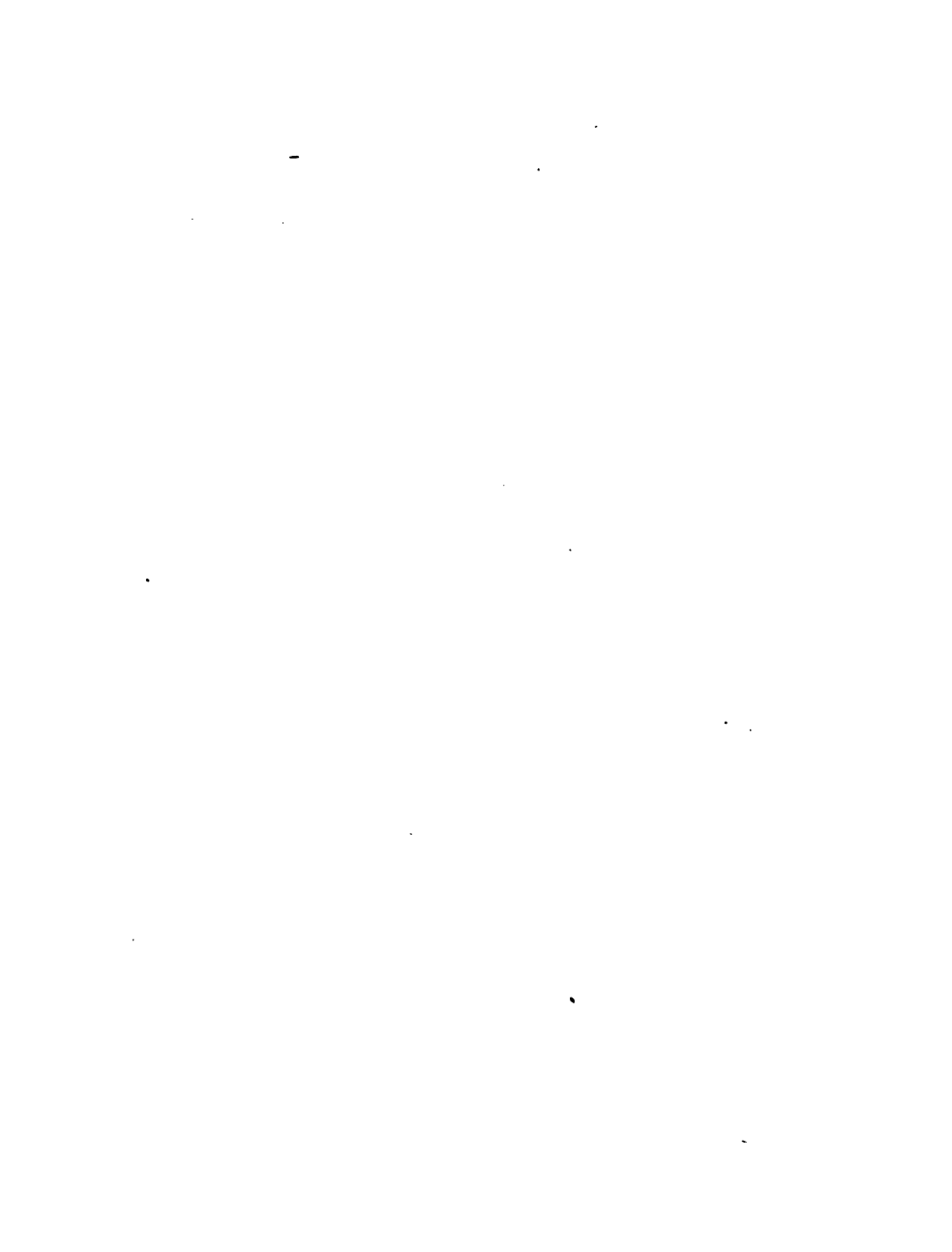
COUNTRY QUARTERS

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



1923



THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

Leipzig, Bernh. Tauchnitz jun.

COUNTRY QUARTERS.

THE HISTORY OF THE

Country Quarters

IN THE

OF THE

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COUNTRY QUARTERS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a clear bright day in the second week of December, 18—, when the sound of martial music drew nearly every female inhabitant in the picturesque little town of—, in the south of Ireland, to the windows of their houses in the main street; and many a fair and smiling face looked forth with cheeks rendered more rosy than usual by animation, and eyes sparkling with pleasure.

The street, it being Saturday, a market day, was crowded by peasants, their blue and grey frieze coats slung carelessly over their shoulders, a bright coloured cotton or silk handkerchief passed once around their throats, with the ends floating, their coarse felt hats, beneath which their broad and strongly-marked faces were seen, excited into an expression half comic, half curious, as they eyed the portion of the regiment then marching into the town. The peasant women with their blue and red cloaks, some with the hoods drawn over their heads, while others, and chiefly those of the youthful part, wore simple white muslin caps, adorned with a gay-coloured ribbon, or a snowy dimity hood,

from which their glowing cheeks and blue eyes peeped out to peculiar advantage, as half timid, half playful, like startled fawns, they drew near to the houses or behind the men, placing these last as a sort of barrier between them and the soldiers. The stalls in the street, covered with rural merchandise, were partly drawn back to allow the regiment to pass; while here and there a frightened horse or cow rushed wildly among the throng, terrified at the sound of the loud drums and "ear-piercing fifes," and sundry pigs on three legs, the fourth held up by the cord attached to it, and retained by the angry driver, pursued precisely the direction opposed to his wishes, he uttering curses not only loud but deep on its obstinacy. The hosts of the Great Globe and the New Inn stood on the steps of their respective doors, backed by a couple of waiters, anxious to win the officers to their houses. The Great Globe little answered to its high-sounding appellation. It was of small dimensions, built of red brick, of a very fiery hue: the door and window sashes were painted of a bright green, affording a striking contrast to its opposite neighbour the New Inn. This last-named appeared to be the oldest house in the town, and not in the best possible state of repair. The host of the Great Globe was almost as rubicund in the face as his mansion, and, as if to render the resemblance still more striking, he wore green spectacles, to relieve an habitual inflammation of the eyes, was clothed in a bottle-green coat, a red waistcoat, and wore a flaxen wig. He of the New Inn was a tall lusty man, dressed in a faded brown coat, a drab waistcoat, and wore a black wig. Each

of the hosts stood on the tiptoe of expectation, bowing low as the regiment marched on, followed by a numerous crowd of idle boys and girls, as well as by the fool, of which race every Irish town possesses at least one. The waiters of the rival houses partook of the peculiar characteristics of their employers both in their dress and appearance. Their manner, too, assimilated, for while the master of the Great Globe expanded his lips into a broad smile of cordial welcome, closely imitated by the man and boy, styled waiters, standing behind him, he of the New Inn maintained a solemn gravity only to be equalled by that of the two old men in sad-coloured suits who, with soiled napkins in hand, bowed every time he did.

And now the music of fifes and drums was changed for that of the full band, much to the delight of the hearers. The well-polished brazen instruments shone bright as gold in the sun; the negroes, with their clashing cymbals, white turbans, and gilt collars, attracted general admiration, mingled with some degree of alarm, among the women and children. The portly drum major was pronounced by various groups to be the grandest gentleman of the whole; and, as with head erect, protruded chest, and shoulders kept back, he strutted proudly on, occasionally throwing up his gilt-topped staff in the air and adroitly catching it again, shouts of approbation followed the feat. The colonel — an elderly, dignified-looking man — rode at the head of his regiment, gravely glancing from side to side at the strange scene through which he moved; his charger champing the bit of his bridle

and keeping time to the music, much to the amazement of the spectators. Rushing from the open doors of the shibeen-houses* might be seen youths excited by whisky, with the soft, dark down of manhood still unshorn on their upper lips and chins, wildly throwing up their hats and swearing they would enlist; while endeavouring to hold them back were aged grandmothers, remonstrating mothers, weeping sisters, and blushing sweethearts, who prayed them "not to break the fond hearts that loved them by going to be soldiers." The house of the magistrate — the most stately in the street — stood back from the other dwellings, having a small garden, well filled with laurustinus and arbutus, separated from the street by iron rails. The windows of this mansion were occupied with plants, through which young and blooming faces peeped forth sparkling with animation — the owners all unmindful that a cold air was blowing their silken tresses over their rosy cheeks in "most admired disorder," and tinging with red the tips of their little piquant *retroussé* noses. "Ah, what beautiful music!" exclaimed one. "Look, what a handsome officer!" cried another. "Which? — where?" inquired others of these gay and guileless young creatures.

On the opposite side was the house of the doctor, with its shining brass knocker, well rubbed every morning, as the spiteful said, to make believe it had grown so bright by being constantly used by patients seeking aid from its owner.

* Spirit-shops.

"Just look at Fanny O'Farrell," exclaimed the plump and pretty Honor O'Flaherty, "how demure she looks. She pretends not to see that handsome young officer who carries the colours, tho' I'd lay a wager of Limerick gloves she knows every feature in his face as well as —"

"You do, Honor," interrupted Bessy Mac Henry, "who have never taken your eyes off his face since he came in sight."

"Is it me? — that's a good joke, Bessy. Just as if I had looked more at him than you did!" replied the blushing Honor, betraying some embarrassment at the charge.

"What do you think of the sight, Miss O'Neill?" inquired one of the young ladies to a lovely girl who kept rather in the background of the picture. "Did you notice the handsome young officer who carried the colours?"

"I was so much pleased with the whole stirring scene that I did not examine the individuals that composed it."

"That's always Miss O'Neill's way," observed Honor O'Flaherty. "While we, foolish giddy girls as we are, are admiring the red coats, she, I am pretty sure, was thinking of all the hardships to which this regiment has been exposed. O! I know her so well! Why, I had all the trouble in the world to coax her to come and see the regiment march into town; and I don't believe she would have come at last if her grandmother had not persuaded her."

"I must plead guilty to your charge, Honor," replied the fair and beautiful girl who answered to the name of Miss O'Neill, "for the sight of the faded and tattered colours

waving in the bright sunshine, bearing witness to many a death struggle against the foe in a foreign land, *did* draw my attention away from the present in the midst of the gay scene, and for a moment saddened me."

"Well, you see, she's not like us," said the smiling Honor, "for, when our eyes were fixed on the colour-bearer, hers were only directed to the colours."

"I must say there are some very handsome men among the officers," observed Fanny O'Farrell.

"So you said when the last regiment marched in," remarked Bessy Mac Henry.

"And she was right too," answered Honor O'Flaherty. "Wasn't Major Villiers, and Captain Elliotson, and Lieutenant Saunders handsome men?"

"They were not ugly, certainly; but the major had such a solemn face, he never smiled," said Mary Macchene.

"That was because he had bad teeth, and you shouldn't blame a poor man for his misfortunes," rejoined the laughing Honor, with a deprecating tone.

"We'll be sure to see all the officers marching to church with the regiment to-morrow," said Bessy O'Neill.

"Ay, and *in* church also," observed Honor.

"I hope that there is not among us any girl so unthinking as to bestow a look or a thought on them in the house of God," said Miss O'Neill, gravely. "That would be very wrong, indeed."

"You'll end by turning a Methodist, Grace, that's what

you will," answered Honor O'Flaherty, "as if there was such a mighty crime in looking at these red coats."

"You mistake me, Honor," replied Grace O'Neill. "I think it just as bad to look at a black or a blue coat, or its wearer, or at one of our own sex, when we are in a temple dedicated to prayer "

While this animated dialogue was going on the regiment had been drawn up on the parade, and was thence dismissed to the barracks; and the officers entered the Great Globe — that being the inn which, from its more flourishing appearance, promised the best cheer and accommodation — but, being found too small to contain the whole, the junior officers adjourned to the New Inn; not, however, without many regrets expressed by Mr. O'Sullivan, the host of the Great Globe, that his house could not hold them all, unless the young officers would consent to occupy inferior rooms and sleep three or four in each chamber. Breakfast being ordered, Tom M'Carthy, the head waiter, as he proudly termed himself, while busy in covering a very large table with a snowy-white cloth — the officers filling the windows of the room, and gazing into the street — ventured to address the colonel: —

"Is there anything at all partiklar, curnel, that you 'd like to have for yourself?" inquired Tom. "A divilled leg of a turkey? The Great Globe is famous for divile!"

"Give us the best breakfast you can serve," replied the colonel.

"Oh, and isn't it myself that 'll be sure to do that

same, and no mistake? Only, curnel, I thought that perhaps you 'd like something quite partiklar for yourself, just to come up smoking hot between two plates, which I 'd set down before you; for what 's a divilled leg of a turkey if it is to be shared between so many?"

And he looked around.

"Is this neighbourhood well inhabited?" inquired the colonel.

"Well inhabited!" reiterated the waiter. "Faith, and it is, your honour; and a great pity it is, for that 's what makes ould Ireland so poor, and will keep her so too. There 's two mouths for every potato; which all comes from boys and girls marrying and having children, when they 're no better than children themselves. Poor crathurs, they bring starvation on themselves and their brats before they 've got sense in their brains."

"You mean that the country is over-populated?" observed the colonel.

"Why, in regard that the children spring up faster than the potatoes, I do, curnel."

"When I asked you whether the neighbourhood was well inhabited," resumed the colonel, "I meant to inquire whether you have many noblemen and gentlemen's seats about here?"

"Oh, plinty, your honour. First we 've the Marquis of Snowhill, as great a nobleman as can be found in all Ireland, who has an elegant place within five miles of the town."

"I 'm glad to hear his lordship is in the county," observed the colonel.

"Is it him, curnel? Faith, and many would be glad to hear it too; but, if they haven't a headache till then, they won't suffer even from drinking hot whisky punch. Sure the castle is shut up, and not a soul in it but the ould porter and his wife. The marquis hasn't been in Ireland these twenty years and more, for the marchioness is an English lady, plase your honour, and she says the Irish air doesn't agree with her; so the marquis stays away on account of her health, and every sixpence of rent is sent out of the county to him, to be all spent in London. No wonder it 's so rich; for sure many a thousand of Irish money goes to it out of poor Ireland, not a farthing of which ever returns to it. We have Lord Millicent, who has another elegant place, and a deer-park; but he can seldom find time to come to Ireland, he has so much to do in England. One day you 'll read of him in the papers arriving at Newmarket, and the next somewhere else. He 's what is called on the turf, and that doesn't leave him a minute to look after his business here, which is a great pity; for, when he used to come, he did a power of good. He used to have all the boys in the whole parish to go out beating the woods when he and the English lords he brought with him were out shooting, and every boy who had his legs peppered by the shots used to come home with his pocket well filled with tenpennys. Oh! 't was a fine time for the poor crathurs!"

The colonel, a grave man, looked at the speaker with wonder, while many of the other officers appeared not a little amused by his originality.

And now breakfast was brought in, and certainly no complaint could be made of its want of copiousness. Beef steaks, mutton chops, broiled fowls, crimped salmon, fried trout, with slim cakes and griddle bread, and a profusion of eggs, cream, tea, and coffee, were spread on the board.

"This breakfast justifies the reputation of Ireland for plentiful repasts," observed the colonel, addressing the officers seated around the table.

"Is it plinty in Ireland, curnel?" said the waiter. "I'll go bail, your honour, Ireland's the place for plinty for man and baste, provided they're genteel; ay, by my troth, and for a hearty welcome into the bargain."

"What is that?" inquired one of the officers, pointing to a dish of salmon, the white curd of which nearly concealed the delicate pink of the fish.

"Sure that's salmon, your honour," rale elegant Black-water salmon, and a great dainty it is, as you'll find if you taste it."

And Tom seized the dish and handed it to the officer, who, eyeing it through his glass, declined it, saying, "No, no, that doesn't look a bit like English salmon. Nothing would induce me to taste it. Salmon never looks white in England except when out of season."

"Oh, murther! isn't it enough to dhrive a man raving mad to hear the likes of that," blundered out the waiter,

"when all the world knows that the rare beauty of the Irish salmon is to have that elegant curd on it, which comes partly by nature and partly by the fish being crimped? Sure Ireland beats the whole world for salmon!"

The enthusiasm of Tom for the fish of his native land excited only laughter. Not one of the officers would taste the salmon, which led to his telling his friends in the kitchen when he returned there that "them English up stairs were, after all, a poor ignorant set, who did not know what was good, and were too prejudiced to taste a novelty."

"I heard that Irish beef was good," observed the colonel; "but this," pointing to some on his plate, "is tough and tasteless."

"Then don't judge of all the beef, cornel, by this specimen, for sure this came from the piper's cow, who had danced away all her fat, for the poor crathur had such an ear for music that she couldn't be quiet when she heard him playing, and that's what made her so lean."

"What nonsense!" replied one of the officers. "Quite improbable," said another; but no one smiled at the joke, which induced Tom to report in the lower regions of the Great Globe that "them English were mighty slow at taking a joke."

"That seems a strange fellow," observed the colonel, as Tom left the room.

"Very strange, indeed," said Lieutenant Marston. "Did you observe what a strange story he told about the piper's cow?"

"As if a cow ever could dance," remarked Lieut. Hunter. "I ought to know something of cows, for my father has the finest in Yorkshire."

"You must never believe a single word the Irish say," said Captain Sitwell.

"A very liberal mode of judging," observed Colonel Maitland.

"I hope the Irish will amuse me. I like to be made to laugh; and the Irish characters on the stage always made me laugh, they had such a funny way of speaking," said Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"People pretend they are always uttering jokes; but I never can understand jokes. I hate joking — it's vulgar," observed Lieut. Marston.

"Here 's something, curnel, that 'll make your breakfast sit aisy on your stomach," said Tom, the waiter, entering, with a smiling countenance, and presenting a bottle of Irish whisky to Colonel Maitland.

"What is it?" inquired the colonel.

"Faith, it is the rale potheen, and not to be matched in any house in the whole town."

The whisky was declined by all the officers, to the utter surprise, not unmingled with a contemptuous pity, in the breast of Tom M'Carthy, who shook his head when he related this fact to his friends in the kitchen, and said, "What poor crathurs they must be!"

When Colonel Maitland and Major Elvaston withdrew, the junior officers looked sadly at each other. Captain

Melville was the first who broke silence, and, drawing a deep sigh, he exclaimed, "I fear we are doomed to die of *ennui* in this barbarous place!"

"Can't we get up steeple-chases, or races?" said Mr. Hunter.

"Or get the wild Irishwomen to run in sacks? — it's such good fun," observed Lieut. Marston.

"Or get up balls with some of the pretty girls we saw in the windows as we marched into the town?" interrupted Mr. Hunter.

"Hunter is for getting up some love affair already," said Captain Melville. "But he must take care of what he is about; for Irish fathers and brothers are ticklish fellows to deal with, I am told."

CHAPTER II.

"WELL, I must confess that I never saw so many pretty faces in one church as to-day," remarked Captain Sitwell, as he and his brother officers sat lounging in the largest room of the Great Globe, appropriated to their use, the Sunday after their arrival.

"Then sure you'd see twice as many more, your honour, if you had gone to the chapel," observed Tom, the waiter, who happened to be then serving a bottle of soda-water to one of the officers, and who, as usual with him, lost no opportunity of joining, *sans ceremonie*, in any conversation going on in his presence.



"Indeed!" said one of the party, "I did not know that religion made a difference in female beauty."

"Troth and it does in Ireland any way, your honour."

"You don't mean to say that Roman Catholics are handsomer than Protestants?" asked Captain Sitwell; "that would be too absurd; and not even all your eloquence, Friend Tom, and I am ready to admit you have a more than ordinary share, could make me believe such an assertion."

"Well, wait and you'll see I am right," replied Tom, "for sure the rare beauties are the true ould Milesians, and them are all Roman Catholics, while the Protestants are only poor *Sassenachs*."

"But we're no admirers of old beauties," remarked the officer. "We prefer young ones."

"And, by my troth, you're right; but I only meant of ancient descent by saying ould," replied Tom with rather a contemptuous air.

"And who is considered the greatest beauty in your town?" inquired one of the youngest officers.

"Miss O'Neill is thought to be by some, while others prefer Miss Honor O'Flaherty. Then there's Miss Kate Broderick, and Miss Bessy Mac Henry, and many more that's thought to be very handsome."

"But, for your own taste, which is the prettiest?" demanded another young officer.

"Miss Grace O'Neill, to my thinking, bates 'em all hollow, was the answer.

"I dare say that was the black-eyed, rosy-cheeked charmer

who showed her white teeth in church by biting one of the very reddest under lips I ever saw in my life," observed Captain Sitwell.

"Not at all," replied Tom. "Miss Grace goes to chapel; and, as for biting her lips, or showing her teeth, though whiter and evenner never were seen, she's not one to do the like. Her pretty mouth is always quiet, unless she speaks or smiles, which is not often; for, though she's mild as May, she's not given to smiles, except when she speaks to her good old grandmother, or to the poor, and then it's the smile of an angel, full of pity, and not of a beauty wanting to show her white teeth."

"Pon my word, you grow quite poetical," observed the officer who had previously spoken.

"And so it is only to her grandmother and the poor that this fourth Grace shows her teeth?" said another; "but, as the poor abound here, frequent opportunities are afforded her of exhibiting her pearls."

"Is it she exhibit anything! No, Sir, she's above it. She'd be ashamed to exhibit even her goodness, though many a one has found it out. But here's the big coach, with Sir Geoffry Fitzgerald, come to visit the curnel, I'll go bail."

And off hurried the waiter to receive the card of the baronet. Next came an old-fashioned chariot, drawn by horses whose condition proved that they were not kept for mere show, but often officiated in the agricultural department of their owner's establishment.

"Ye gods! look at that turn-out!" said Captain Sitwell. "What a rattletrap, by way of a carriage! and the steeds, how high in bone, and low in flesh!"

A jaunting-car next presented itself, on one side of which sat a red-faced old gentleman, with a young lady seated by him, and on the other an elderly lady of large dimensions, with a young lady to balance the vehicle. Soon after Tom, the waiter, made his appearance with six cards.

"They are for the curnel," as he persisted in calling the colonel, "and the major."

"Let us see them; let us see them," exclaimed all the young officers. The baronet's card, thrice as large as the usual dimensions, was examined. On it was printed, "Bally-macross Castle" and "Deer-park," to show that he possessed two seats. "Mr. Mac Vigors, Mountain Lodge," was engraved on the second; and "Mr. Oliphant Hennessy, Rath-dundrum-hall," on the third.

"They told me to be sure and make no mistake, but give the cards to the curnel and the major only; or, if there were two curnels or two majors, to give to both of them."

"I find that, even in obscure regions, the natives adopt the English plan of showing attention only to field officers," observed Captain Sitwell, as he returned the cards.

"And for a good reason," said one of the young officers; "the old fellows are afraid of us young ones turning the heads of their wives and daughters;" and the speaker

looked in the old-fashioned mirror between the windows, drew up his shirt collar, and smiled complacently.

The following day the barrack-rooms were ready to receive the officers, and the Great Globe was left nearly as deserted as its great namesake after the deluge, while the New Inn resumed its propriety and dulness, which had been greatly disturbed by the officers and their servants during the previous two days.

"The Lord have mercy on their sinful souls!" exclaimed the proprietor of the New Inn; "how fearful it was to hear them take *His* name in vain on every occasion!"

"But more especially when I handed them the bill," observed the demure and affectedly sanctimonious waiter, turning up his eyes to the ceiling until only the whites of them were left visible. "What a volley of oaths then burst forth! 'Your master is a Methodist, is he not?' said one of them to me. 'He is a humble Christian, Sir,' was my reply. 'He has drawn up a very Methodistical bill, however,' says he; 'and tell him from me that, judging by his charges, I should not take him to be much of a Christian.'"

"What signifies what such a foolish young fellow, without the fear of God before his eyes, says? It is but right, if one be compelled as a publican to harbour such sinners under one's roof, to make them pay heavily for the accommodation, and all their spiteful remarks won't impair the value of the money I have got from them."

"That may be," thought the waiter; "but an unrea-
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sonable bill always puts people in bad humour to behave well to the poor waiter."

In a different spirit did Thomas M'Carthy, the waiter of the Great Globe, comment on the officers who had left it. "Faith and shure," said he, "they behaved quite genteel;" and he shook in his hand the liberal supply of silver given to him by the army, as he termed the officers. "People may say what they like, but the English are capital men for paying their way. The divil a word they said against the bill; troth, not so much as a long face among the party, but out with the purses at once, all in as good humour as if there was no bill in the case."

"Indeed," observed his employer, "they were real gentlemen, and did perfect justice to the fine old claret I gave 'em. Irishmen couldn't have enjoyed it more."

"But it would have put more life into 'em, and they'd have been singing as gay as larks, while the English took it as aisy as if they were drinking water."

On Monday the clergyman, the magistrate, and the doctor called on the officers, not confining their visits to the colonel and major, but extending them to the whole corps.

"We shall have some fun, I fancy," observed Sitwell, "for the old gentlemen hinted at dinners to come and tea parties without number. An Irish tea and turn-out must be a delectable pleasure. They also spoke of balls to be given."

"A ball in a place like this must be amusing, at least,

for once; and Irish misses will have the advantage of novelty to recommend them, if one could get over the dreadful Irish accent, of which I have a perfect horror," said Mr. Hunter.

"Hang it, Hunter, it can hardly be as bad as the Yorkshire dialect, in which you excel," observed Captain Sitwell.

"Me!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter. "Well, that's a good 'un, however. I have always been told that I had not the slightest touch of the accent peculiar to Yorkshire."

"And you were told the truth," resumed Captain Sitwell; "for you have not the *slightest*. *Au contraire*, you have the most remarkable Yorkshire dialect I ever met with." And Sitwell gave so very successful an imitation of Hunter as caused a general laugh.

"I am told," said Lieut. Marston, "that, if you happen to look at an Irish young lady at dinner, she instantly says, 'Port, if you please!' and, if you dance twice with one, the following day a tall, uncouth brother calls on you to inquire 'what your intentions are.'"

"By Jove, that would be no joke!" observed Hunter. "What would my governor say to the alternative of my bringing home an Irish wife to Wintern Abbey, or being shot because I declined doing so?"

"Why, as you happen to be his only son, the probability is that he would prefer a son with an Irish wife to no son at all," replied Captain Sitwell.

"I never thought of that," said Hunter; "but should I fall desperately in love with one of these young ladies

and be forced to marry, 't would be a good excuse to the governor."

"Then you admit the possibility of being *forced* to marry?" inquired Captain Sitwell, somewhat contemptuously.

"I didn't exactly mean that," replied Hunter, colouring; "but, if these Irishmen are such savages as to insist on men marrying their sisters —"

"You see nothing to be done except to submit to their wishes?" interrupted Sitwell, sneeringly.

"You always interrupt one before you know what one is going to say," remarked Hunter, peevishly.

"I'm sorry for you, Hunter," resumed Sitwell, laughing; "but I see it 's all up with you. You 'll leave this place a married man, as sure as you 're born, if any Sir Lucius O'Trigger of a father or brother should take it into his head that you should wed his daughter or sister."

"I 'll bet you a pony I don't, unless I should happen to take a fancy to the sister."

"Or that she should fall in love with you?" resumed Sitwell; "in which case you would, I am sure, be too good-natured to break a poor girl's heart, or force her brother to send a bullet through yours."

"I am not so very good-natured as you may think," said Hunter. "Did I marry Miss Vincent, though every one allowed that *she* was over head and ears in love with me when we left our last quarters?" And Hunter drew

up his shirt-collar, and glanced at a small looking-glass in the room, with the air of a conqueror of hearts.

"But you forget *she* had no brother," observed Sitwell.

"And if she had ten brothers I would not have married her," replied Hunter, "for I never will marry any girl I am not in love with."

"But why did you pretend to be in love with Miss Vincent?" demanded Sitwell, sternly.

"I did not pretend," replied Hunter. "I really thought I was in love with her, until after two or three days, on the march, I found I had quite forgotten her."

"And do you think you had any right, when so little assured of your own feelings, to trifle with hers, and make the poor girl believe you really loved her, and so win her affections?" inquired Sitwell.

"Have I not told you that I really believed I loved her until I discovered that out of sight out of mind? And, if I can do without her, if I never think of her, why should I marry her, I should like to know, especially as it would drive my governor mad?"

"A man of honour should think of all this before he tries to gain the affections of an amiable and innocent girl," observed Captain Sitwell. "And now, Hunter, that you are aware of your own instability of character, you will cease to be considered as such if you ever again play the unfair game you have been practising with poor Mary Vincent."

"But it isn't my fault that I have forgotten her," said Hunter, looking disconcerted.

"But it is your fault that you made her believe you never would; and that probably at this moment the poor girl is thinking of you with a misplaced tenderness that may long embitter her days."

"She'll get over it, as I have done," replied the selfish young man; "and, as she is by far the prettiest girl at Exeter, she'll be sure to find plenty of admirers among the officers of the regiment that replaced us."

"A supposition worthy of you," remarked Captain Sitwell, disdainfully, "and arguing little for your heart."

"Come, come, Sitwell, it is not because I happen to be your subaltern that you are to dictate to me on any other than military matters," observed Hunter, sulkily, his fat chubby face growing red with anger.

"It is precisely because you happen to be my subaltern, and that I wish you to do credit to your profession, that I shall always give you my opinion when your conduct does not please me. You are young, inexperienced, and require advice, and, however unpalatable it may be to you, I will not fail to administer it when I see occasion."

Some brother officers entering the room put a stop to the discussion, leaving all who heard it impressed with the opinion that young Hunter was a selfish and unfeeling fellow, while he considered himself very ill-used by the interference of his superior officer on a subject not connected with the articles of war, or the regimental orderly-book.

"What a confoundedly dull place this is," said one of the officers who had lately entered the room. "Not a civilized-looking being to be seen in the streets. The women wearing the fashions of seven summers ago, and such clumsy ill-made shoes as would render Venus herself no longer attractive. The young men riding about on Irish hunters, of which we have heard so much, but which bear no more resemblance to English ones than their riders do to the fellows one sees at Melton. There is certain indescribable look of pride and defiance in the faces of these young Irishmen, a sort of *gare à qui me touche* expression of countenance that is very provoking. I sauntered with Melville into the environs after parade, and saw two of these Irish squires leaping their horses over the fences. The animals don't leap at all as ours do, but instead of clearing the fence they touch and go, making, as it were, two jumps instead of one. We stood still to look at these would-be Nimrods, rather amused, I confess, which they, I suppose, suspecting, left off their sport, and, confronting us, eyed us with a *fierté* that almost challenged a remark."

"Perhaps they saw you smile, and imagined you were laughing at them," observed Captain Sitwell. "The Irish are said to be peculiarly susceptible of aught approaching to ridicule, especially from the English, and are prone to resent it. If, therefore, we wish to maintain a good understanding with the neighbourhood, we must avoid looking quizzical or smiling when we encounter these wild Irish fire-eaters, for I strongly suspect that not one of them

would be satisfied by the answer given by the clever Frenchman who, happening to laugh when a stranger was passing by him, answered the question rudely and promptly put to him, 'Why did you laugh, Sir, when I passed?' by the ready answer of, 'Why did you pass, Sir, when I laughed?'"

"The fierce-looking individuals in question rode remarkably well, I must confess," observed Captain Melville, "reminding one of the Elgin Marbles, or of the fabled centaurs, seeming to form a part of their horses, so closely did they adhere to the animals."

"I hear," replied Captain Sitwell, "that the Irish gentlemen are not only capital riders, but excellent shots and good fishermen. In short, that they are famous sportsmen, and very liberal in giving permission to others to enjoy similar amusements on their properties; a singular piece of good fortune to poor devils like ourselves condemned to country quarters in places promising so few *agréments*. I confess that in England such liberality is rarely exercised towards the military, or at most is only occasionally extended to field officers who happen to belong to the aristocracy. Mere soldiers of fortune, or rather let me say of no fortune, are seldom, if ever, invited to share the pleasures of a *battue* in the well-guarded preserves of any nobleman or gentleman near to where their regiments happen to be quartered; or, if by some rare chance such an event should occur, they are given over to one of the gamekeepers who knows his business, which is to lead them where least game is to be found."



"You are quite right, for I have experienced this treatment many a time; but, grown aware of the manœuvre, I defeated its success by privately exhibiting a golden portrait of my sovereign to the keeper, a hint he so well understood that I was allowed to enter covers never meant to be profaned by aught less than a cabinet minister, foreign ambassador, or princely noble, who repays such stately hospitalities in kind."

"A capital plan. It is a pity that it cannot be oftener put in practice."

"Chary as we English are said to be of our money, even the richest have this reputation, our magnates are still more chary of allowing poor devils like us soldiers to partake the pleasure of shooting their game. This is a gratification confined exclusively to the rich in England; and although the Irish gentlemen have no well-guarded preserves to offer us, no *battues* where a massacre of the feathered race takes place every season, I am by no means disposed to reject their civilities, and am ready to shoot grouse over their mountains, partridges in their fields, and woodcocks and snipes in their bogs. Nay, I am quite prepared to eat their dinners, though French cooks are not very common in this green island, and to drink their claret, which is more pure, as I am given to understand, than in England."

"And I am quite willing to follow so good an example, if the temptation should be thrown in my way."

CHAPTER III.

THE visits of the few neighbouring gentlemen who had left their cards on the colonel and major being duly returned, as also those in the town, invitations to dinner came pouring in, for when was an Irish gentleman found deficient in exercising the rights of hospitality? The colonel was requested to bring three or four of his officers, this being, as the writers of the invitations stated, the general custom of the country.

A public ball, to be followed by a supper, was announced to take place at the Court-house in a few days, under the auspices of the neighbouring gentry, and the colonel and officers of the — Regiment. Every female heart in — beat quicker at this announcement, and the officers declared they would each and all attend, being extremely impatient to see the beauty and fashion of —. Every mantuamaker in the town was busy in consultation with the youthful belles, whose tastes were exercised in the colours and forms of the dresses to be worn on this momentous occasion, while mothers and aunts regulated the prices, which were, as they stipulated, “on no account to be exceeded.” Often did the young ladies entreat that *tulle* or gauze might be substituted for book muslin, or that sarsnet might be used for slips instead of glazed cotton; and then the comparative difference of the expense of the two materials was calculated on a bit of paper, and gauze

and silk being *only*, as the youthful ladies said, little more than triple the cost of book muslin and glazed cotton linings, mothers were implored for this once to yield to the desires of their daughters with an eloquence only to be resisted by prudent mammas, with the fear of a lecture from stern husbands before their eyes.

"But the expense, my dear girls, the expense! and then, book muslin was so nice, and looks almost as good as new when well got up."

"And *tulle* and gauze dye so well, dear mother, and a sarsnet slip can be worn with every dress."

The book muslin, however, was decided on, the alternative being offered to the young ladies, either to go in muslin dresses, or to remain at home. The material being definitively settled, the colour became the next question. How many times did Honor O'Flaherty waver between a pink, a blue, or a white robe? Pink was so becoming, blue looked so light, and white so simple and ladylike; and then she deliberated on the probable effect of each on her peculiar style of beauty. Every woman, however plain, believes that she has a peculiar style, if not of positive beauty, at least of something approaching so near as to be frequently mistaken for it; and to dress so as to suit this imagined peculiarity becomes the object of each. The *fade* blonde, believing herself a languishing beauty, attires her person in blue *celeste*, thinking that delicate colour the best calculated to show off her peculiar style. The brunette selects yellow, which she thinks makes her look fairer.

The lady troubled with too much *embanpoint* chooses a dark-coloured dress, and the one with too little selects white, each quite assured of producing the desired effect. This spirit of coquetry, originating in the amiable desire to please, inherent in the female sex, was as predominant in the ladies of the remote town of — as in Paris, that Paradise of women, whose thoughts are ever fixed on “witching the world” by their skill in the secret arcana of the toilette. Bent on committing havoc on the hearts of the newly-arrived red-coats, the various fabrics of the loom to be procured at — were examined, compared, and at length decided on.

One fair girl alone might be excepted from entertaining this desire to captivate, and this was Grace O'Neill, who declared to her grandmother that she preferred staying at home with her to going to the ball. “Indeed, darling, you *must* go,” said the good old lady. “You confine yourself too much to the house with me. You may shake your head, Grace, but indeed you do; and the consequence is that you are losing your fine colour for want of the exercise and gaiety suitable to your age, and a little dancing will do you good.”

“Don't ask me, dearest grandmother. I really prefer not to go.”

“And I, Grace, have set my heart on your appearing at this ball; so I will lay my commands on you for this once, — a rare thing between us, my child, for you are

always much more disposed to obey than I am to command."

"But is it not foolish, dearest grandmother, for us, who are not rich, to throw away money on a dress for an occasion that does not at all tempt me?"

"Ah! Grace, things are changed since I was a girl. Young persons now are wiser than their parents; ay, even than their old grandmothers. But for this once I *will* have my way. A book muslin dress will not ruin us, poor as you think we are; and a flower out of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's conservatory, to which we are always welcome, will be sufficient ornament for your head; and, with your pearl necklace, I doubt not that my Grace will look as well, if not better, than any girl in the room."

"Your partiality misleads you, dearest grandmother, and would make me vain if I did not remember its extent."

And Grace arose, and, clasping her arms around the neck of the worthy Countess O'Neill, kissed her forehead. "God bless you, darling," said the amiable lady, her eyes filling with tears. "You are the pride and comfort of my life."

But our readers must permit us to make them acquainted with the grandmother and granddaughter, nay, more, with the grandfather. The Countess O'Neill, now in her sixty-fourth year, was the widow of a General O'Neill who had long served in the Austrian service, his religion — he being a Roman Catholic — having precluded his entering the army in his native land. Of an ancient family — so an-



cient that its origin was traced to one of the kings of Ireland — persecution and confiscation had for many years so diminished the once large fortune of his progenitors, that when left an orphan, when little more than a boy, it was deemed expedient that, furnished with letters of recommendation from the hand of a neighbouring nobleman to no less a personage than Maria Theresa herself, and with a genealogy containing as many quarterings of nobility as that of the proudest count of the Holy Roman Empire, he should proceed to Vienna and enter the service of the Empress. His good looks, gallant bearing, and, though last not least, his gentle blood, found favour in the sight of his protectress. He soon had a commission bestowed on him, with an allowance to support it with decent dignity, and he so well justified the favour shown him that he gained the respect of all who knew him. The young Irishman arrived to offer his services to Maria Theresa at a critical moment for her, for never were her affairs in a more hopeless state. Without troops, allies, or money, and with ministers incapable of assisting her by their counsel, any other woman would have despaired. But her heroic heart and courageous mind sustained her, and the aid of England and her brave Hungarians lent her fortitude. In this extremity she convoked a Diet at Presburg, whither the young O'Neill, with other volunteers, followed her. He beheld her for the first time when, with the crown of St. Etienne on her head and the royal sword girded to her waist, she appeared before the Assembly with her young



son in her arms. Attired in deep mourning — in that most picturesque of all dresses, the Hungarian — her appearance made a deep impression on all who beheld her; but, when she addressed the States in Latin, her youth, her beauty, and misfortunes won all who listened to her cause. “Abandoned by my friends, persecuted by my enemies, attacked by my nearest relatives, I have no resource but in your fidelity, your courage, and my fortitude. I place in your hands the daughter and son of your King, who depend on you for their protection.” The magnates, fired with enthusiasm, drew their sabres and cried aloud, “Let us die for our sovereign, Maria Theresa!” Up to that moment she had maintained an attitude of calm and majestic dignity; but, beholding the devotion of her adherents, she burst into tears, which so excited their feelings that they would willingly have sacrificed their lives for her at the moment. Nor did their enthusiasm in her cause subside until she had regained her rights and established a peace the most advantageous to her interests. In all the actions fought O'Neill distinguished himself in his profession, and his promotion became as rapid as his most sanguine hopes could anticipate. He had, after many years' service, attained the rank of general, with the title of count of the Holy Roman Empire, bestowed by the Empress as a reward for his bravery in several actions and as a proof of the high estimation in which he was held, with a pension for his life to maintain the rank to which he was elevated.

A longing desire to behold once more his native land



induced the Count O'Neill to visit Ireland. He was welcomed by the few persons still alive who had known his worthy father; and by all who remembered the handsome, manly, ingenuous youth who, twenty years before, had left that neighbourhood to seek his fortune in a country where his religion was no impediment to his entering the profession of arms, to which he was formed to do honour. Often had his fame reached the land of his birth through the newspapers, and his countrymen were proud of his reputation. But when he visited them his bronzed but still handsome face, his gallant bearing and fine soldier-like figure, with the military decorations bestowed on him, excited a warm interest in his favour among the men, and a still more lively one among the women, ever prone to admire bravery and military distinction. Many were those who, forgetful of his father when the son was left unprovided and an orphan, now came forward with alacrity to claim acquaintance with the handsome and distinguished Count O'Neill, and to solicit his acceptance of their hospitalities. Every anecdote connected with his childhood or with his father was now recalled to the minds of his new-found friends, to the surprise and admiration of those who well remembered the little notice taken of the orphan youth, who had now become an object of such attraction to those who had then neglected him. The Count O'Neill's servant, too, an Irishman, who had entered his service some ten years before, considerably aided in extending the reputation of his honoured master. He spoke of rich countesses

whose hands and broad lands it only depended on the count to have accepted; nay, more, of princesses, as he described them, rolling in gold and covered with diamonds, who were dying with love for his sake, but whose advances he had slighted. He told of his having danced with the Empress Maria Theresa herself at the court balls, an honour seldom conferred except on kings and princes — of orders sparkling with jewels bestowed on him, with a heap, as he expressed it, “of diamond rings and snuff-boxes enough to fill a jeweller’s shop.” Patrick O’Donohough, for so was Count O’Neill’s servant named, had a lively imagination, and no ordinary eloquence in displaying it on all subjects, but more especially when the honour and distinction conferred on his master became his theme. He believed that in exalting the general in the opinion of all with whom he was acquainted he took the most effectual means of gaining consideration for himself; and, as he really entertained the warmest admiration for his master, his statements were tinged with all the high colouring which an unbounded partiality and a profound respect could bestow. The old axiom, that no man could be a hero in the eyes of his valet de chambre, did not hold good in the case of Count O’Neill and Patrick O’Donohough; for, although the former was allowed by those who knew him to possess all the qualities which constitute a hero, in no eyes did he possess them in so eminent a degree as in those of his servitor, perhaps for the simple reason that not a single spark of envy mingled with his admiration; and

of how few of the admirers of heroes could this be asserted!

"I wonder the count never married any of those princesses or grand ladies that you say were in love with him, Mr. O'Donohough!" would one of the *femmes de chambre* of his female acquaintance observe when Patrick had been boasting of the numerous tender passions his master had inspired in foreign lands.

"The count," would he reply, "is too proud a gentleman ever to become the left-handed husband of even a queen."

"And what's a left-handed husband, Mr. O'Donohough?"

"It's a marriage contracted with a person of inferior rank, which, though tolerated in a religious point of view, is not openly acknowledged, as a marriage is between equals. A king marries, suppose, a countess or a marchioness; he makes her a duchess or a princess, but he cannot make her a queen; nor her son by him cannot be a king; but the lady is known to be his majesty's wife, *à la main gauche*, as we say in France and Germany, which means by the left hand."

"Ah, I see now, Mr. O'Donohough — I quite understand, and I think the count was quite right not to be a left-handed husband. It's for all the world like being a bishop's wife, who is only plain 'Mrs.,' while he is 'my lord' and 'your lordship,' which has always made me wonder that any lady would consent to marry a bishop."

"And you are right, Mrs. Maroony. Husband and wife should be equal in every respect, which is the reason that

I have remained single; for, says I often to myself, when I might have married above me, which I might have done more than once, ay, or twice, if I had wished it — not that I am given to boast, God knows, but ladies *will* sometimes take a fancy — yes, and *real* ladies too — to persons far below their own station; but, like my master, I objected to a left-handed marriage. It would never have done for me to have my wife a countess, while I was only plain Mr. O'Donohough; and so I refused the offers made me."

The boastings of Patrick produced a great effect on his simple auditors. *He* who had conquered the hearts of countesses achieved an easy conquest over those of the hand-maidens of the neighbourhood where he now found himself; for it is one among the many mysteries of the female heart, from the highest down to the lowest grade in society, that the man who has, or who is supposed to have, won the affection of women superior to himself is generally an object of attention to the rest of the female sex. Many were the aspirants for Patrick O'Donohough's affections among the pretty and coquetish maidens who waited on the young ladies in the neighbourhood, — but many more were the assaults aimed at the heart of his master by the young ladies themselves.

But Count O'Neill was accustomed to such attacks, and resisted them as a soldier of twenty years' standing, and great experience in the stratagems of love as well as in those of war, might be expected to do. Nevertheless, while he was well guarded against the attacks he was prepared for, his heart yielded at once to the charms of a lovely and artless girl who

never dreamt of touching it, or of disputing the prize with those who were so anxiously striving to gain it. The beautiful Mary O'Halloran was surprised to find that the affection sought by so many competitors was accorded to her; but surprise was quickly followed by delight when, authorized by this declaration of attachment, she allowed herself to become sensible of his numerous attractions and noble qualities. Hers was not a heart to yield itself unsought, or to dwell on the perfections of any man who had not evinced such a decided preference for her as might justify such a contemplation; but now, convinced of the sincerity of his affections for her, she abandoned herself to the contemplation of a character which every day's intercourse enabled her to judge merited all her esteem, and she repaid his attachment with one no less fervent and profound than his own. A new world seemed to open before this young and lovely creature as she yielded her heart to the passion that now filled it. The sky seemed brighter, all nature seemed embellished, and love tinged every scene and every object around her with fairer hues. She dwelt in an elysium, into which the world's cares and thoughts could not penetrate; and she resigned herself to the happy present, as children do to slumber, without a fear for the future. Love was the magician that had wrought this change; and she only wondered, as she compared the *past* with the *present*, how she had endured the placid, monotonous course in which her days had previously rolled on, contrasted as they now were with such felicitous ones, — bright and blissful illusions of a first love, felt but once, and



ever after looked back on as the halcyon days of life, the green oasis in the dreary desert of existence.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY O'HALLORAN was envied by all her female acquaintance when it became known that the gallant, the distinguished Count O'Neill had demanded her hand; but even envy could find nothing to hint a fault in one so pure and artless as this lovely girl. The young gentlemen in the neighbourhood envied the count, and expressed their regret that, while some of them were deliberating on the momentous question of proposing for Mary O'Halloran, a new competitor should arrive and bear off the prize.

In due time the marriage was solemnized, and the fair bride would have been the happiest of her sex had not the prospect of leaving her widowed mother damped her felicity. Pressing were the invitations given by Count O'Neill that his mother-in-law should accompany him and his wife to Vienna and make her home with them; and the timid but doting mother had at length yielded her assent, when the count was summoned by the Austrian Government to repair to London, thence to proceed on some mission of importance, after which he was to return to Vienna with as much speed as possible. This last injunction offered a formidable obstacle to his mother-in-law's accompanying the Count and Countess O'Neill to Vienna. Her delicate health precluded her undertaking a hurried

journey; nor did the count think it right to expose his wife to such a trial under existing circumstances, she having been pronounced to be *enceinte* a few weeks before. What was to be done in this unexpected emergency? And how little time was there for reflection! It was decided that the count was to set off for England forthwith, leaving his carriage for the use of his wife and mother-in-law, with his faithful servant Patrick O'Donohough, to escort them to London, whence they were to proceed by easy journeys to Vienna, where he would make the necessary preparations for their reception. The separation, though believed to be but for a short time, filled the heart of the Countess O'Neill with such sorrow that she blamed herself for being childish and unreasonable at being thus afflicted. Had there been time for reflection, she felt that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for her to refrain from accompanying her husband, notwithstanding her conviction that her doing so would prevent her mother from proceeding to Germany with them. But the whole affair had been so hurried over, the count departing the evening of the day he received the summons, and the few hours that intervened between, her spirits had been in such a tumult that she knew not, until she beheld the chaise that was to bear him away, and was clasped to his heart in a parting embrace, how much above her strength was the sacrifice she made in letting him depart without her. She strained her eyes after the carriage as it was rapidly driven from her sight, and when the sound of the receding wheels

could be no longer heard she dropped into a seat, pale and speechless. Mrs. O'Halloran, pressing her lips to the icy brow of her child, whispered that in two days they should set out to join her son-in-law, while a pang thrilled the maternal breast at finding that she who had until lately been all-in-all to her child could not now suffice, even for a few weeks, to console her for the absence of her husband. She almost wished that she had not accepted a sacrifice which cost her daughter such grief, and expressed something like this to the countess. She could not have had recourse to any better means of recalling her daughter from the all-engrossing regret to which she was abandoning herself, for the words, though not meant to do so, sounded like a reproach, and, clasping her arms around her mother's neck, she asked her pardon for forgetting, in the anguish of a first parting from her husband, the rich reward for this brief separation would be the blessing of having her mother to share her home in a distant land. Nevertheless she found tears continually chasing each other down her cheeks, though she attempted to smile at her own weakness as she wiped them away. She found her eyes continually turning towards *his* vacant chair, and remembered with a pang of agony not to be subdued that every passing minute took him farther from her. "Alas!" thought the tearful wife, "what may not a day bring forth? This morning I awoke the happiest of women, without the most remote dread of this heavy trial, and now he is hurrying far from me, putting miles and miles between; and the

sea — (she involuntarily shuddered at the recollection) — the broad sea will soon roll between us. Had any one whispered a few hours ago the possibility of such misery so soon occurring, I could not have believed it; yet it *has* come to pass. We have parted, and while I look around on objects fondly — oh! how fondly — associated with him, *he* is hurrying through scenes where I have never been, where nothing can bring me to his memory. How cheerless, how desolate must all scenes be where the beloved has never passed, where one cannot identify his image with a single object, or say ‘here he thought of me!’ But my beloved needs no such reminders. His heart will talk to him of his poor Mary! How he would chide her weakness if he knew how utterly unable she is to bear even a short absence from him. What a wretched soldier’s wife I shall make should he be called from me by a war! But I must not think of anything so dreadful.” When the countess sought her pillow, the sight of that which her husband’s head had pressed the night before renewed her grief. She kissed it while her tears fell on it, and she almost screamed with joy as a letter slid from under it. “How thoughtful, how tender, how like him!” exclaimed she, eagerly breaking the seal and reading over a farewell as fond and as passionately devoted as her own woman’s heart could have dictated. He had anticipated all her feelings, all her regret; and every syllable in his letter dropped like a healing balm on her heart. Again and again she read that precious letter, and thanked the Almighty Giver of all good for

having bestowed on her a husband so worthy of all her love.

The second day after the departure of Count O'Neill, his wife and mother-in-law, accompanied by a youthful and simple maiden, who served them, and by the faithful Patrick O'Donohough, set out for Waterford, where they were to embark for England. Mrs. O'Halloran, struck by the extreme depression of spirits of her daughter, and alarmed for its effects, had hurried her preparations for departure, and left an old and trustworthy servant in charge of her house and furniture until an opportunity should offer of disposing of both. Though she sympathized with the deep depression of spirits under which her daughter was labouring, she could not quite comprehend its cause. So short a separation ought, she imagined, to be borne with more fortitude; and she trembled with apprehension for the future, on observing how little able her daughter was to submit to the trials from which no wife, and more especially a soldier's wife, can be exempt. "Poor, poor Mary," thought the fond mother, "may Heaven preserve you from any greater trial than the present!" The travellers reached Waterford on the second day of their journey, determined to embark by the next packet that should sail, and on alighting at the hotel nearest to the quay the countess announced their intention to the landlady as she conducted them to their rooms.

"I hope, ladies, that you will have a safe passage," said she, "for we have all been greatly shocked by the

intelligence which has this evening reached us of the loss of the packet for England, which sailed three days ago from this port, every soul on board of which has perished." A thrill of horror passed over the frame of Mrs. O'Halloran, and an instinctive movement drew her closer to her daughter, on whose arm she was leaning as they were slowly ascending the stairs. A faint shriek escaped the lips of the countess, and she fell into the arms of her mother in a deep swoon. She was taken to bed while still in a state of insensibility; a medical man was sent for, who found it expedient to call in another to his aid; and for several days the life of the bereaved wife was despaired of from the effects of a violent brain fever. Alas! the fatal intelligence so abruptly conveyed to her was but too true; the packet in which Count O'Neill, with other passengers, had sailed had gone down the night he embarked, in a heavy gale of wind, and the floating spars of the shattered wreck, one of which bore the name of the vessel, revealed its fate. Long was it before the hapless widow was in a state of mind to comprehend the truth. She raved continually of the last parting with her husband, uttered frequent reproaches for being detained from joining him, and menaced those about her with his anger for keeping her from him. Her mother never left the room of her suffering child. Whenever, exhausted by fatigue, she reposed for a short time, it was always on a small bed near that of her daughter; and she would allow no hand but her own to administer the medicines ordered for her. In vain the

doctors warned Mrs. O'Halloran that she would inevitably destroy her own delicate health by her exertions and constant confinement to the sick chamber. No warnings, no arguments, could induce her to leave her child for even half an hour; and when after three months the Countess O'Neill, reduced to nearly a breathing shadow, was restored to consciousness of her deprivation, she found her mother so changed in appearance as to be hardly recognizable. Her attenuated form and pale face appealed more forcibly to the heart of her child than all the reasoning that the most eloquent preacher could utter. In them she saw the results of care, anxiety, and sorrow, which had made such inroads on the life of her parent; and now, aware that in six or seven months she herself would become a mother, she felt more than ever disposed to fulfil the duties of a daughter, and to make an effort to live to repay the debt of gratitude she owed to her doting mother. She wished to live also to behold and bless *his* child; and a flood of tenderness gushed to her heart as she thought of her unborn infant. O! should it but resemble its father, that husband so adored, and so soon snatched from her, she might yet be able to bear existence, although happiness could never more be hoped for. There were moments when the blissful but too fleeting days of her wedded life appeared to her but as a dream; and she asked herself whether it could be indeed true that she had been so blest, and was so desolate? Then she would look back, and remember how calmly had glided away her days until she

beheld him whose loss had steeped her life in wretchedness; and would ask whether there was no lethean draught which could destroy the memory "that such days were, and were most sweet?" But her heart told her that, whatever might be the tortures which memory could inflict, she preferred them to forgetfulness of *him* who had been the idol of her life, and was now the guiding star that pointed her hopes to heaven. No! she should hate herself could she forget him; and that existence, which could never more be brightened by a hope of happiness for herself, should be devoted to the care of his child. That the terrible shock she had received had not destroyed her infant seemed little less than a miracle; and for this boon she was, indeed, most grateful to Heaven. Always pious, the Countess O'Neill became now more so than ever. Her thoughts continually reverted to that better world where no tears are shed, where no more partings are. There *he*, so passionately, so fondly loved, had preceded her; and there she hoped, one day, to join him. This blessed hope sustained her; and, when it pleased the Almighty that she should see the face of her child, should hear its feeble cry, and press it to her breast, she felt that, for its sake, she could submit to live.

The Countess O'Neill and her mother returned once more to their home, that home which when they left they believed they should enter no more. The day they again took possession of it was, indeed, a painful trial to the youthful widow; but when she felt the bitterness of grief

renewed she pressed her infant to her heart, and remembered how baleful to its health would be the indulgence of the violent sorrow she found it so difficult to subdue. She had insisted on nursing her child, and her mother, aware how much this occupation would fill her mind and lighten the weight of affliction that had crushed her, approved the measure, firmly calling her daughter's attention to the absolute necessity of the self-control to be exercised by a nurse. The dread of injuring her infant's health became now the fixed rule of the doting young mother's conduct, and, as she marked the effect of this almost heroic triumph over self on the child, she was repaid for it.

Patrick O'Donohough's grief for his adored master partook of all the fire of his character. The blow fell on him with such a stunning shock that for many days he would not, could not, believe it to be true. "Oh! no, it can't be," said he; "haven't I seen him often in the midst of the field of battle surrounded by the enemy; his nostrils open like those of a war horse when it snorts at the sound of the cannon, his hair rising from his temples as if in defiance, his fine eyes flashing fire, and his white teeth exposed by his open lips; his sabre gleaming like lightning as he whirled it over his head, cleaving down those opposed to him, as the scythe of the reaper mows down the ripe corn, each stroke leaving a red stain on the blade? Oh! it was a grand yet terrible sight to behold him at such moments! and, as I think of him coming safe from such danger, I can't bring myself to believe that he could meet

death anywhere but on the field of battle. Then he could swim as I never saw any one else do. He seemed as much master of the waves as of his charger, mounting and descending on them when they were in their rage as naturally as the sea-gulls do. And then to have such a hero go down in a common packet like any of the other passengers, and to have his noble body become food for the sea monsters and fishes, oh! it drives me mad; and I'm always thinking that if I had been with him, and couldn't save him, at all events I'd have had the honour and comfort of dying with him; and a great honour and comfort it would be."

Poor Patrick begged permission of Mrs. O'Halloran to go to England a few days after the news of the fatal catastrophe had reached him. "I have heard, Madam," said he, "that it was near the English coast that the ship was lost, and who knows but the body may have been cast on shore, in which case I'd bring it over for interment? Lord, lord, if he had died at Vienna what a grand funeral he would have had! I want to go to the Austrian ambassador in London too, and it's right for many reasons that I should; but, my master, — may the heavens be his bed! — having left me in charge of the countess, I could not leave my post without leave."

Alas! the poor countess was in such a state of distraction that for many, many weeks she could not be appealed to on any subject, but her mother yielded assent for Patrick to proceed to England, he solemnly assuring her that his going would be for the good of his lady.

Patrick departed, and tarried some weeks on the coast near to which the packet had been wrecked, but no tidings could be obtained of the body of his master. Day after day would he, with a couple of boatmen, row about the place pointed out as the scene of the disaster, praying, with a tortured heart, that "the sea might yield up her dead," and endeavouring to peer into her depths to discover the object of his search; but all was vain; that noble form which still lived in his memory was never more to meet his sight, and, convinced of this, he proceeded to London to relate his sad story to the ambassador. This nobleman had been an old and intimate friend of Count O'Neills, and knew Patrick, the fate of whose master excited the deepest regret in his breast. Patrick could have hugged him to his heart when he witnessed the tears he vainly tried to check.

"O, count, sure it's no use crying," said the poor fellow; "remember that your friend has left a widow, the loveliest, the best of women; and, if I may touch on such a matter, she is likely to bring forth a child. God grant it may be a boy to support his name! Write to the Emperor, count. If his mother was alive she'd be a mother to his wife and child, for she loved him like a son." And here tears checked the words of poor Patrick as he remembered the distinction with which his departed master had ever been treated by the Empress.

"Write to the Emperor, count, and remind him that one of the bravest officers he ever had has left a widow

who will in a few months have a child; that she is the only daughter of a widow as noble in mind as she is poor in pocket; and that a pension for the Countess O'Neill and her child for their lives is the least he can give to prove how he valued the departed hero."

Patrick found a patient hearer in the ambassador, who lost no time in making such a representation to his Sovereign as led to a pension of £300 a year being granted to the widowed countess for her life, with a reversion to her child should it prove a girl, and the offer of an education in one of the military colleges, and a commission in the army, should it be a boy. This gracious grant was accompanied by a letter to the Countess O'Neill written by the royal hand, containing such high eulogiums on her departed husband, and expressions of such deep interest towards herself, as must have soothed her heart had she then been in a state of mind to comprehend its kindness. But the hour was not arrived when such unexpected goodness could mitigate the violence of her grief, for her reason still tottered on its throne. The faithful Patrick, by the advice of the ambassador, proceeded from London to Vienna with letters of recommendation to some of the most attached friends of his late master, in order that the property of the deceased should be converted into money for the benefit of his widow, and, so anxious were the companions in arms of Count O'Neill to possess anything which had belonged to him, that every article of furniture in his apartment, with his swords, pistols, &c., were purchased at thrice

their original cost, forming a much larger sum than had ever been anticipated. The Emperor had a copy made of a fine portrait of Count O'Neill which he possessed, and sent it, with a handsome watch, chain, and seals, and a valuable diamond ring, to the widow.

CHAPTER V.

THE faithful Patrick O'Donohough, a general favourite with the friends of his late master, met with great kindness and sympathy from them. Several offered to take him into their service; and the general who commanded the regiment in which Count O'Neill had formerly served so strongly recommended him that a pension of thirty pounds a year was granted to him for his life by the order of the Emperor.

"I must return to my duty," said Patrick. "My honoured master placed me in charge of the countess, and in her service I'll live and die; since what else have I now on earth to do but prove as devoted to her as I was to him?"

"But, if she should marry again?" suggested one of Patrick's friends.

"Marry again!" repeated Patrick, with an air of *fierté*, "after having such a husband as Count O'Neill? You little know her. No; she'll never look on another man with eyes of affection, unless God should give her a son

who may resemble him. She 's not a woman to love twice."

Deeply interested for the youthful widow by the artless but animated description of her given by Patrick, the brother officers of her late husband determined to send her a mark of their affection for his memory. They subscribed to her a tasteful and valuable tea service, executed in silver, with a suitable inscription, which they forwarded to her through the Austrian ambassador in London; and Patrick returned to Ireland the bearer of eight hundred pounds, the produce of his poor master's effects at Vienna, and a considerable sum of his own, the gifts of his master's friends, absolutely forced on him.

"I'm come back, Madam, never more to leave my mistress," said he to Mrs. O'Halloran.

"I am afraid, Patrick," replied she, "that our circumstances will not permit us to retain you, which I greatly regret, for we know how to value you;" and she sighed deeply.

"Faith, I was afraid of that, Ma'am, and I didn't like to be a burden; but still I couldn't leave my charge. Sure the last word *he* ever said to me was, 'Patrick, never leave your mistress.' And could I forget that command? I was always thinking how I could manage to obey *his* orders without being a burden to you, Ma'am, or to the countess; and I remembered that I was brought up to be a tailor when I was a boy, though it's a confession I never made to mortal since I went to Vienna, fifteen years ago; and

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which I hope, Ma'am, you 'll have the goodness never to tell to any one;" and Patrick looked around cautiously to see that no one was listening to this confession. "Sure, Ma'am, I was ashamed of my life to think I had been of all things in the world a tailor, the ninth part of a man, as they are called, a dress-maker in breeches, saving your favour. It was hearing people everlastingly laughing and jeering about tailors that made me leave my trade and go off to Germany with a young gentleman with whom I lived till he died; and then I had the honour — and sure a great honour it was — to enter *his* service who is now in heaven. And often and often, when his clothes didn't quite fit him, and I saw, plainly enough, for all their conceit, that them extravagant tailors at Vienna couldn't alter them to his mind, I have locked myself up and ripped the clothes, and pinched them in here, and let them out there, until I had got them quite to *his* fancy; and then I used to be so pleased and proud when he praised them, that I was sometimes tempted to tell him the truth, and ask him to let me make all his clothes; but then the thought of being laughed at, of being considered the ninth part of a man, stopped my tongue, so I never let out the secret. But, as I was going to tell you, Ma'am, when I suspected I might be an expense, a burden to the countess and you, I determined to take a little room near your house, and set up for a tailor. I could work for six hours in the morning before either of you were up, and get through a power of work, and be ready to serve breakfast, and do

all my mistress and you required during the day; and I could earn enough to keep myself free of expense, and to put by something over and above for whatever might be wanted." Mrs. O'Halloran looked her gratitude, for she was too much touched to speak. "But now, Ma'am, this sacrifice of my pride — and it was the greatest I ever was willing to make — is not necessary, and I rejoice in it, for I believe I was a fool to be ashamed of an honest calling; but when folly gets into the head of the young it's hard to get it out after." And then Patrick entered into a full detail of all that had taken place at Vienna, delivered the Emperor's letter and gifts, assuring the pension, and wound up by handing an exact statement of the sale of Count O'Neill's effects, and the sum they had produced, to Mrs. O'Halloran. "Oh, Ma'am," added he, "if I have an advice to offer, it would be that you and the countess and *his* child, when it pleases God to send it, should go to Vienna, where you would find friends and brothers in plenty for *his* sake; and where the Emperor and Empress, Heaven bless 'em! would stand by you all as long as you live. There you would see how *he* was adored; yes, Ma'am, positively adored."

Faithfully did Patrick serve his mistress, and fondly did he doat on the little daughter of his never-forgotten master, though when she first saw the light he regretted that God had not sent a son to bear the count's title, and in due time go to Vienna. But as the child grew up he became reconciled to her sex, and almost worshipped her. Mrs. O'Halloran died

some few years after, and the Countess O'Neill, a delicate invalid, almost constantly confined to the house, found every day what a treasure she possessed in the faithful servant of her departed husband. He managed her little property so judiciously, being, at once, her housekeeper, cook, and butler, that, at the end of every year, she discovered that such savings had been effected by Patrick that the fund appropriated as a marriage portion for her daughter was daily increasing. Her deep devotion to the memory of her departed husband had caused Patrick to look up to her with a reverence never surpassed. He considered her, and he was not wrong in his belief, as one of the most faultless of her sex, "a perfect saint," he used to say, "whose heart was set on Heaven, where *he* now was who had been too good for this world." The child of his master grew up to womanhood, educated by her exemplary mother, whose delicate constitution she unfortunately inherited. Patrick taught her to ride, provided her with a horse, and one for himself to attend her, and made her a riding-habit (working in secret) which was the admiration of all the town and neighbourhood, and which was supposed to come from London, so well did it fit its fair wearer, and so admirable was its workmanship. His own clothes were also manufactured by himself, though no one but the Countess O'Neill was in the secret; and it was often remarked that no one wore such well-fitting garments as Mr. O'Donohough. At seventeen Miss O'Neill — for, in spite of all Patrick's representations and reclamations on the subject, she was not styled countess, which he declared she

was entitled to be, as the daughter of a count of the Holy Roman Empire — married a colonel of her own name, which, in Patrick's opinion, was a strong recommendation to the match. The colonel, like herself, was an only child — had lost both his parents, and possessed no patrimony, his commission being his sole dependence. He was then on leave of absence, and returned to his native land in search of health, he having lost that blessing by a long sojourn with his regiment in an unhealthy climate. In the course of his perambulations he came on a visit to one of the neighbouring houses, and saw the beautiful Maria Theresa O'Neill. "A mutual flame was quickly caught and quickly revealed;" and, after a courtship of some months, which disclosed the many estimable qualities of the suitor, the Countess O'Neill consented to the union of the lovers.

"Sure, Madam," said Patrick, who, presuming on his attachment and long services, considered he had a right to offer his opinion, "what more could be desired? Is he not an Irishman, a colonel, and an O'Neill? A brave soldier, as I have often heard her father, who is in heaven, say, is worthy of any alliance. The darling child is not strong enough to bear disappointment; so, in God's name, let her have the man of her heart."

This simple reasoning was all-powerful with the fond mother. She bestowed her daughter's hand on the colonel, who became an inmate of the maternal roof, adding largely to its happiness, until ten months after, when Mrs. O'Neill expired in giving birth to a daughter, leaving her husband

and her mother plunged in the deepest grief. The poor infant—all that now remained of a daughter she had adored—was received into the arms of its sorrowing grandmother, and was so fondly cherished, so tenderly cared for, that, contrary to the prediction of all the neighbours, it grew and prospered, to reward, by its infantile smiles, her who from the hour of its birth had devoted herself to it. Silent grief, acting on the shattered health of the bereaved husband, rendered it soon apparent that he could not long survive his beloved wife. In seven months he followed her to the tomb, having bequeathed his child to her grandmother, well convinced that in that admirable woman she would find the tenderest of mothers. Even on this occasion the faithful Patrick proved the judicious friend of the family. Seeing the danger of Colonel O'Neill, and entertaining little hope of his recovery, he suggested to him the prudence of selling his commission and investing the money it produced for the use of his child. The suggestion was immediately adopted, and four months after the sale was effected and the produce secured to the child, the Countess O'Neill being named guardian to her granddaughter and executrix to the colonel's will. The heavy trials which had fallen on the Countess O'Neill had chastened her mind and purified her heart. She felt that the infant bequeathed to her care required that *she* should quell her grief if she hoped to live long enough to fulfil the duties of the task she had undertaken, and thenceforth she bent all her thoughts to its fulfilment. Often would she consent to partake some delicacy which the watchful fore-

thought of Patrick had prepared for her, when he urged the necessity of her keeping up her strength for sake of the darling Miss Grace, for so was the child named.

"Sure, Madam, how can you hope to live to see her grow up if you won't take nourishment enough to keep life and soul together, but go on only tasting one little thing or another, just for all the world as if you were a sparrow?"

Often might Patrick be seen rolling the countess in a garden-chair which he had provided, with the child on her knee; and as often might he be seen dancing the baby in his arms, and singing to her, "for fear," as he used to say, she would grow up dull in so quiet and silent a house where a laugh or a loud word was never heard. And the child soon learned to know and love her humble friend. She would hold out her little dimpled hands the moment he entered, crow and smile the moment he offered to take her; and he would say, while he wiped a tear from his eye, that he could fancy sometimes that he was in a dream, and that it was his blessed master's own child instead of his grandchild he was looking on, the mother and daughter were so exactly alike.

"Well, to think that I, who was a gay young man at Vienna," would Patrick say, "going to the wine-shops with my companions and dancing with the pretty girls at fêtes, should have passed away my youth nursing child after child, and the countess, poor dear lady, into the bargain! But what could they do without me? Sure God is good. If *He* lets trouble and sorrow fall on some, *He* puts it into the hearts of others to be of use to 'em; ay,

and teaches 'em how. I never could have believed that ever I could learn to be a nurse or a cook, and sure I'm both — through the force of necessity; for I do believe that if I had not had the thought to learn to cook a few nice things, and the perseverance to make the countess eat 'em in spite of her inclination, she wouldn't now be alive after all the sorrow she has gone through; and, as for both the darling children I have brought up, they 'd have died in their cradles if I had not kept up their spirits with dancing 'em and singing sprightly songs to 'em; though, God knows, I often did both when I was more inclined to cry than to sing. Well, God be praised, I have been of use; this is a consolation for having been a tailor. What an angel of a woman the countess is, and so was her mother before her, never to have thought the worse of me after knowing this secret!"

Never did a miser take more pleasure in saving money than did Patrick O'Donohough. He confined his own personal expenses to so limited a sum, that three parts, at least, of his pension were hoarded and placed out at interest for the purpose of adding to the portion of the granddaughter of his never-forgotten master. Nor could all the eloquence of the countess ever persuade him to accept any wages, or any pecuniary gift, from her. Her small establishment — consisting of Patrick and two female servants — he managed with such strict economy, without, however, neglecting every comfort, and many luxuries, for the table of the countess, that she frequently felt surprised

when the amount of the disbursements, which Patrick regularly entered in a book, was placed before her every month; and wondered how, even in Ireland, so proverbially cheap, the expenditure could be so little. Patrick had an especial pride in this systematic economy: first, because it increased the little fortune of Miss O'Neill; and, secondly, because it proved his ability in housekeeping, and excited the wonder and admiration of the Countess O'Neill. He calculated every half-year the sums saved from the pension of the countess, as well as from his own, and the interest thereon, also on the £800 produced by the sale of Count O'Neill's property at Vienna, with the sum for which the late Colonel O'Neill's commission sold. "She 'll be no pauper after all," would he say, as he summed up principal and interest on a slate — a favourite occupation of his when he had a little leisure, and which furnished a subject of wonder to the two women servants of the establishment, to whose questions he always replied that he was calculating the national debt, a reply not the less satisfactory because wholly beyond their comprehension. The marriage and death of his master's daughter, with the birth of her child, and the death of its father, were duly announced to the friends of Count O'Neill in Germany by Patrick, who entreated the general who had formerly obtained the pension for the countess and its reversion to her daughter to have it extended to the count's granddaughter; and so well did Patrick urge the case, and so powerfully the general advocate it, that the Emperor,



who had not forgotten his brave officer and favourite, readily and graciously complied with the request; and a letter signed by royal hand was the first intimation the countess had of Patrick's persevering and successful efforts to better the fortunes of her granddaughter — the request he had made having never once occurred to her to suggest or to believe likely to be crowned with success.

"Faith now, Miss Grace will be quite an heiress — a real rich heiress," said Patrick. "The countess blamed me for asking that the pension might revert to her; but don't I well know that the count's faithful services and acknowledged bravery richly merited anything that could be done for his grandchild; and don't I know that she's more likely to get well married with a good fortune than if she had only her beautiful face and the noble blood in her veins to recommend her? Money, money is everything now. 'How much will she have?' is always the question; and if a young gentleman in love (and sure she has beauty and goodness enough to make any young gentleman fall in love with her) should forget all about money, isn't there always an old father or guardian to remind him of it? Often I've thought of this, and provided against it, so that Miss Grace may hold up her head with the best in regard to birth, beauty, and fortune. And Patrick O'Donoghue has proved that though a man may have been a tailor he may turn out a faithful steward, and correspond with counts and a general too, to serve the granddaughter of his master, who, at some future day, will, with the

blessing of God, when he meets him in heaven, say, 'Thank you, my good Patrick!'

CHAPTER VI.

SUCH was the history of the grandfather, grandmother, father, and mother of Grace O'Neill. When we introduced her to our readers she was in her seventeenth year, and one of the most captivating and amiable girls in the world. A little above the middle stature, and exquisitely formed, with a profusion of hair, black as the raven's wing and of the softest texture, Grace was dazzlingly fair, with a delicate and transparent rose colour in her cheeks that paled or increased with every emotion of her susceptible mind. Her eyes were dark blue, shaded by long and thick lashes, and might, whenever they sparkled with animation, have passed for hazel. Her long, black eyebrows were slightly arched, and defined the commencement of a nose so finely formed, and in such perfect harmony with the whole face, that it might have challenged separate admiration in one less perfect; but, though each feature was faultless, the peculiar beauty of the mouth rivetted the gazer's eye. Small, with lips of just the desirable fulness, and so red as to make the cheeks look pale, they disclosed, whenever they opened, teeth white and even as pearls. Her face was of a perfect oval, which, with the fine features delicately chiselled as if a sculptor had formed them, gave a classical style to her beauty, without, how-



ever, any of the cold or inanimate character peculiar to sculpture. The symmetry of her figure, and the exquisite delicacy of her feet and hands—these last perfections considered so rare in her country-women—excited general admiration wherever Grave O'Neill appeared; and when, as sometimes occurred, remarks on the somewhat clumsy proportions of the hands and feet of Irish ladies in general were hazarded by English officers with more *naïveté* than good breeding, Miss O'Neill was triumphantly quoted as a proof that an Irishwoman had fairy fingers, and feet that the slipper of a Cinderella could fit. Unfortunately she was the single exception in the whole neighbourhood to the general rule—a fact which she only seemed not to know. With such personal charms, Grace was wholly free from the alloy that but too frequently accompanies great beauty—vanity. Simple, natural, and unaffected, yet with a dignified maidenly reserve that enforced respect even from the young and giddy, Grace was one of the most amiable, as well as the most lovely, of her sex; and, although universally acknowledged to be so, excited neither the envy nor hatred of any of them. Each and all admitted her immeasurable superiority without a dissenting voice, or even the use of the disparaging (strange as it may seem,) conjunction, *but*; nay more, her private friends, however incredible it may appear, were absolutely proud of her beauty. Although bred in so retired a spot, and where showy accomplishments could not be easily attained, Grace O'Neill was not deficient in even these. A chorister of the ca-

thedral in Cashel came twice a week to give lessons on the piano to a few of the young ladies of—, and Grace, under his tuition, applied so diligently to music, that she, after some years, acquired a proficiency in it. She drew and painted in water-colours better than many young ladies who had been taught by expensive masters, though a love of nature and a strong desire to copy its works alone guided her in its study. The Countess O'Neill, when the crushing affliction of the loss of her husband befel her, found, after the first year of her sorrow had elapsed, her only consolation in reading. She fled not to novels, as women do to opiates, and men to even more condemnable stimulants, for a temporary oblivion of care, but had recourse to the perusal of history, in which the vicissitudes of life, occurring even to the greatest sovereigns of earth, taught her lessons of fortitude while cultivating and strengthening her mind. This vast and well-digested store of information rendered her a most able monitress to her granddaughter, whom she had habituated to think and reflect, an art but too little attended to in the process of education, and the want of which precludes women from becoming the rational friends and companions of their husbands. Grace O'Neill had been taught to dispense with the luxuries which even the finances of her prudent grandmother could well afford in a country so cheap as Ireland, though all the requisites for comfort were granted. And, while the countess, by a well-regulated system of economy, was every year adding to the portion of Grace, she was

kept in ignorance of the real state of affairs, and believed herself and her grandmother much less rich than they actually were. Not that the Countess O'Neill would ever have condescended to aught resembling deception, but that she thought it most prudent not to reveal the actual state of her fortune to Grace until she had reached her twentieth year, in which opinion Patrick O'Donohough entirely coincided.

"Faith, Madam," would Patrick say, "if some of the wild young men about here, with good Milesian blood in their veins it is true, but with few guineas in their purses, knew as well that Miss O'Neill had some thousands of pounds safe in the funds as they know that she is beautiful, we'd never have a moment's peace or rest with proposals pouring in from the day she was fifteen up to this hour; and she herself, too, though she *is* the most perfect of God's creatures, might not be so easily satisfied as she is now if she was aware that she has twice a better fortune than any of the young ladies in her neighbourhood, ay, by my troth, or in the next city. Sure did I not hear the waiter at the Great Globe say t'other day that most of the young ladies at Cashel had only two washing gowns and three tunes on the piano for their fortune. Miss O'Neill would be for squandering her money on the poor, I know well enough, for she never can keep a shilling in her pocket when she sees 'em, and is ready to believe every lie they tell her."

We left Grace O'Neill yielding to the wishes of her

grandmother in preparing for the ball, and when the night on which it was to take place arrived, and that she stood before her in her simple but tasteful *toilette*, perhaps a more lovely creature never was beheld. Patrick was permitted to see her, a privilege of which he was not a little proud; and having walked around her, carefully examining her dress, he gravely nodded his head in sign of his perfect approbation, and drew forth a bouquet of beautiful flowers, which the gift of five shillings had procured him from the gardener of Sir Henry Travers.

"Thanks, good, kind Patrick," exclaimed his young mistress, as he loved to call her; "what rare and lovely exotics! Look, dear grandmother, how much finer these are than the bouquet sent me by Lady Fitzgerald an hour ago."

"Ah, poor lady," observed Patrick, "and much finer than she or her daughters will have to-night. They'll get the very refuse of the greenhouse, while that rogue Tim Shaughnessey has sold the pick and choice in the town for the ball for his own profit."

In a short time after the sound of the wheels of Lady Fitzgerald's old rumbling coach was heard approaching the door, and Grace O'Neill, having embraced her grandmother, and promised not to dance too much, and to be sure not to stand near an open window, nor to drink cold water, nor to eat ice while she was heated, descended, conducted by Patrick, who, with ill-dissembled pride, handed her into the coach.

"Well, isn't she a glorious creature, Madam?" exclaimed he, as he returned to remove the tea things from the countess's little drawing-room. "It did my heart good to look at her, so it did. I'm sure there won't be any lady in the room to compare with her, and all eyes will be fixed on her at the ball. I'd like very much, Madam, to step over and see how all goes on for an hour, if you don't want me. It always reminds me of the grand balls at court, when I used to get a place in the orchestra to see my noble master, with his elegant court dress and diamond stars on, dancing with one of the archduchesses. Though, God knows, the ball here is a very different thing from that at Schoenbrunn;" and he sighed deeply, a sigh which was still more deeply responded to by the countess.

"But I suppose," resumed Patrick, "one ball reminds me of the other because I went to the court only to see my master, and I go to this poor ball to see my young mistress. Often and often do I think how much more suited she is to be at a court ball than at one in the poor town of —. But it all comes to the same at last. The bright eyes that shine at courts grow dim, and close, as well as those that dazzle the gazers in far less grand places, and all go down to the narrow grave at last;" a truth to which the countess assented with a melancholy shake of her head.

Patrick dressed himself with unusual care in order to do honour to his young lady. His black coat, nether garment, and silk stockings of the same sombre hue, showed

off his snowy and delicately-plaited shirt-frills, in which a diamond pin, the gift of the general who commanded his master's regiment, sparkled; and his intelligent face and venerable white locks rendered him one of the most gentlemanlike looking old men imaginable. As at the court ball at Schoenbrunn, some forty years before, a place was accorded him in the orchestra, so at — a seat was reserved for him in the gallery with the musicians, whence he could command a perfect view of the company.

"Just as I expected," murmured Patrick, *sotto voce*, "all eyes are fixed on her. How elegant she looks, and how she dances! That's a very fine-looking officer she is dancing with! How different she is from every other young lady in the room! They're drawing themselves up out of their stays, and bridling, and looking down occasionally at their tuckers, to see that the lace is not rumped, or laughing too much with their partners, or using their fans too violently, or picking the leaves of their nosegays, and are too red in the face, and too determined to dance well, while she, calm and dignified, conducts herself for all the world like one of the young archduchesses, I was thinking of a few minutes ago, now and then giving a little smile or a gentle bow of the head. She is not a bit flushed in the face, while the faces of the other young ladies are as red as peonies. She never looks down at her tucker, nor does anything else that the others do. No wonder that all eyes are turned to her. She's for all the world like a maiden blushrose in the middle of a bed of tulips,

the more beautiful from being seen near the gaudy flowers."

There was not an officer present that did not request to be presented to Miss O'Neill, in order to solicit her hand for a *contre-danse*; but Grace, mindful of her promise to her grandmother, only yielded it to two aspirants for that honour; and then, seated by her *chaperon*, Lady Fitzgerald, remained a pleased spectatress of the dancers. Her first partner, the Hon. Sydney Mordant, hovered around the spot where she was seated, and rendered himself so agreeable to Lady Fitzgerald, by his well-bred attention to her, that she encouraged his advances without appearing to be aware of their motive. He frequently addressed himself to Grace, who replied in a tone of such modest self-possession as induced him to abandon the complimentary style he generally adopted to young ladies, and more especially those of the country, and to assume a more deferential one. Her second partner, Mr. Herbert Vernon, was equally disposed to be attentive, but the reserve with which he saw she received the advances of his friend Mordant checked his ardour, without, however, diminishing his admiration.

"Only look at Grace O'Neill," said the pretty Honor O'Flaherty to Florence Fitzgerald. "Did you ever see her look so beautiful?"

"She is too pale for my fancy," was the reply.

"Call her not pale, but fair," said Sir Henry Fraser.

"Ah! there you are with your quotation, Sir Henry,

always ready. Why can't you speak from your own head instead of from the heads of poets?" said Florence Fitzgerald.

"Because he 's a sensible man," whispered Honor O'Flaherty.

"I 'm sure that whisper contained something malicious against me, Miss O'Flaherty," observed the baronet, looking suspicious and half-offended.

"What on earth could I find to say against you?" replied Honor, looking provokingly innocent.

"I hardly know; but when young ladies are so given to quizzing as some are," and Sir Henry looked reproachfully at Miss O'Flaherty, "no man is safe from their assaults."

"You must forgive me, Sir Henry, if, like one of my ancestors, I take the liberty of studying the antiquities of our common country."

"I dare say there 's some hidden and uncivil meaning in that speech," observed the baronet, growing red with anger.

"You wouldn't think so if you had ever read O'Flaherty's 'Ogygia,'" said Honor, with a contrite expression of countenance.

"And what have I to do with the antiquities of Ireland, I should like to know?" inquired Sir Henry Fraser, suspecting some mischief.

"True, true, I was wrong; you are more given to the study of the middle ages, the florid Gothic," observed Honor.

And the baronet, finding that she meant some covert attack on his age, grew still more red in the face and walked angrily away.

"Haven't I vexed the *ci-devant jeune homme*?" whispered the sprightly and mischievous girl to Florence Fitzgerald, much pleased at having annoyed the baronet, who, as she was wont to say, was "one of her favourite aversions."

"Give me leave to introduce Mr. Hunter," said Colonel Maitland, addressing himself to Miss Florence Fitzgerald.

A bow and a curtesy being exchanged, Mr. Hunter solicited the honour of the lady's hand for the next *contre-danse*. She was engaged for that and the following one; on which Mr. Hunter requested her to present him to her friend.

"Miss O'Flaherty, Mr. Hunter."

Another bow and curtesy, and then followed Mr. Hunter's demand for the pleasure of her hand for the next dance, which, after a pause of half a minute, was accorded.

"Are you fond of dancing?" inquired the gentleman.

"That depends on my partner," was the reply.

"Which means, I suppose, if he happens to be a good dancer?"

"Or a good talker," observed the lady.

"What has talking to do with dancing?" inquired Mr. Hunter.

"A great deal in the choice of one's partner. If he is

pleasant and agreeable, I may like him for that; if not, he ought to be a good dancer. Few are both."

Mr. Hunter looked half puzzled, half offended.

"There may be differences of taste with regard to agreeable men, as well as of good dancers," remarked he, looking self-important.

"Indeed," resumed Honor O'Flaherty, "I always thought there could be but one opinion on these points." And she assumed an air of gravity.

"I used to be considered a tolerable dancer in England."

"And a pleasant talker, I conclude?" said Honor, archly.

He looked more puzzled than before. "Not less so than other men."

"Then I shall have two advantages in having such a partner."

He bowed and looked flattered, and, the sets being formed, led his partner to the dance. Honor being an exceedingly pretty girl and a very good dancer, Mr. Hunter thought her entitled to his peculiar notice, and she, having soon discovered his vanity and pretensions, determined to play him off for her amusement. Arrived at the bottom of the set, Mr. Hunter expressed his hope that she did not think him a very bad dancer, fully expecting a compliment.

"Not particularly; and I think that with more precision in finishing your steps, a greater attention to time, and a more *degagé* air, you might in time become a good dancer."

Mr. Hunter looked as angry as he felt, and observed, that "in England he was considered a very tolerable dancer."

"Luckily," said the sly Honor O'Flaherty, "you converse so agreeably, that you may be pardoned for dancing less well than might be desired."

"My mother gave a splendid ball on my coming of age, and I opened it with Lady Augusta Freeborne, and everybody remarked that we were the best dancers in the room. That was a splendid affair. All the rank and fashion in the county, as the newspapers stated, and all the delicacies of the season, which means precisely everything *out* of season, and which is valued on account of the vast sums they cost; but my father has so large a fortune that he can afford throwing away money."

"I suppose half his life was spent in making money, and he passes the other half in lavishing it?"

"I did not say he *made* his money," observed Mr. Hunter, sulkily.

"O, it was your grandfather, then, that made it?" and Honor assumed a very innocent countenance.

To change a subject that was growing anything but agreeable to him, Mr. Hunter inquired "what was the reason that so many Irish families had an O before their names?"

"Because they were so wonderful," replied Miss O'Flaherty. "that the O was put to express the astonishment excited by that quality, and the descendants of those so distinguished still retain it."

"They are very foolish in doing so; for in England people only laugh at them, and often, when they introduce

a ridiculous Irishman on the stage, put an 'O' or a 'Mac' before his name."

"A very clever and ingenious mode of disparaging us poor wild Irish," remarked Honor. "Nevertheless, I half suspect that you English are very jealous of our 'O's' and 'Mac's,' and would gladly tack them to your names could you make out any claim to them. How well O'Hunter or M'Hunter — which means son of Hunter — would sound. This last would be a proof that a man had a father."

"Every man in the world must have had a father; so you have made a regular Irish blunder, Miss O'Flaherty;" and Mr. Hunter laughed heartily at his own remark. "Don't think I am laughing at my own wit," said he, noticing his partner's grave face.

"And if I did," replied Honor, with one of her most innocent faces, "you might be forgiven on account of the rarity of the cause."

Mr. Hunter looked more puzzled than ever; and, on resigning his partner to the care of her *chaperon*, told his friend, Lieut. Marston, that Miss O'Flaherty was capital fun, said such droll things, and looked so grave while saying them, that one could hardly know what she meant, but that he suspected she was a little bit smitten with him."

"All those Irishwomen have such confounded accents that I can't stand them," observed Lieutenant Marston.

"Why can't they speak as we do?" remarked Mr. Hunter.

"They're devilish handsome, I must say," resumed Lieutenant Marston; "but, somehow or other, they have an indescribable manner, half innocent and half quizzical, that prevents a man being at his ease with them, and makes him think they may be hoaxing him."

"No, no, they're not such fools as to attempt hoaxing one of us," replied Mr. Hunter; "they know better."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ball passed off as most balls do in a country town, where the youthful inhabitants, and more particularly in Ireland than elsewhere, delight in dancing, and have a decided taste for red-coats, and where a newly-arrived regiment awakens fresh hopes in every female heart under thirty that the new comers may be as amusing as those that preceded them, and more disposed to marriage. Nor were the officers of the regiment dissatisfied with the acquaintances they had formed at the ball. The young ladies were pronounced to be "devilish fine girls," "capital dancers," and "very sprightly," though some of the juniors of the regiment declared, and Mr. Hunter was among the number, that Miss O'Flaherty and her friend Miss Mac Henry were somewhat addicted to quizzing; but so they concluded most Irish girls were.

"What a lovely creature Miss O'Neill is!" observed Major Elvaston. "There is something quite different from all her companions in her."

"So Mordant seemed to think," said Mr. Herbert Vernon, "for he never asked any of the other young ladies to dance, or even looked at them."

"A peculiarity which you shared," replied Captain Mordant, "for I observed you hovered about Miss O'Neill all the evening."

"She looked like an oriental pearl among false stones," said Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"A very poetical and pretty comparison," remarked Major Elvaston.

"I have been making all sorts of inquiries about the — beauties," said Captain Sitwell. "Every one admits that Miss O'Neill bears the bell, though Honor O'Flaherty and Bessy Mac Henry, — ye gods, what names! — are not wanting in beauty. It cost me a handful of silver, expended at Miss White's shop in shoe ribbon and bad *eau de Cologne*, to ingratiate myself sufficiently into the old maid's favour to get her to tell me all she had to say."

"How like Sitwell! I dare say he now knows all the scandal of the town of the last half-dozen years' standing."

"There you're wrong, Marston, for it appears that wild as they are no scandal attaches itself to these sprightly damsels, who are more disposed to laugh at than fall in love with their admirers."

"Nothing piques me into making love to a girl like hearing that she has an invulnerable heart," said Mr. Hunter, with an air of fatuity.

"How fortunate it is for pretty girls that your power

of doing mischief does not equal your desire," observed Major Elvaston. "But I venture to prophesy that you will not damage a single female heart while we remain here, unless it be that of Miss White, the milliner, by buying more shoe ribbon, *eau de Cologne*, and lavender-water from her than any one else will do."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied Mr. Hunter. "If any man will bet me fifty pounds that I don't, in three months, make one of the beauties here in love with me I'll accept the wager."

The entrance of Colonel Maitland put an end to the subject, for Mr. Hunter stood too much in awe of his colonel to venture to continue it. The day after the ball, and several ones that followed, Captain Sydney Mordant might be seen repeatedly walking past the door of the Countess O'Neill's house, the windows of which seemed to excite a great interest in him, for he looked up at one after another, and was only repaid for his pains by seeing some peculiarly fine myrtles and geraniums in old-fashioned china flower-pots, which filled the small balconies. Nor did any one observe how often he walked in that direction, save and except Mr. Herbert Vernon, who by some chance pursued the same path as frequently, wondering, what possessed Mordant to prefer that promenade to all others, though, had he consulted his own heart, it might have explained the cause. The other officers had chosen another direction for their daily walks; and, more fortunate than Mordant and Vernon, were not disappointed in their ob-

ject; for in the windows of Miss O'Flaherty and her friend Miss Mac Henry might daily be seen these young ladies, occupied in drawing, embroidery, or reading, not, however, so wholly intent on any of these tasks as not to cast many a glance into the street on the red-coats who, arm in arm, sauntered up and down, although the ladies affected not to be conscious of the presence of their admirers, notwithstanding that occasional loud laughs, or conversation addressed to each other from the officers, must have revealed their proximity.

"How did you like your partners, darling?" inquired the Countess O'Neill the morning after the ball.

"They appeared agreeable and gentlemanly," was the reply.

"You danced only twice, I heard, which pleased me, for I was afraid of your fatiguing yourself. Patrick told Peggy Morrice that your two partners were the handsomest men in the room."

Why did Grace O'Neill blush as she heard her grandmother utter these words; and, instead of confirming Patrick's report, merely admit its correctness by a slight nod of assent?

"Patrick used to be a good judge of manly beauty," resumed the countess; and she sighed, remembering that his taste was formed on the fine specimen of it which her husband, thirty-eight years before, had presented.

"I believe Patrick was right," observed Grace timidly, "for both my partners were very good-looking."

"Lady Fitzgerald, I suppose, told you that she left a note for me to invite you to the castle for three or four days, as they are to give a dinner to the new comers; to which they have invited the neighbourhood, and I have promised for you, darling."

For the first time in her life Grace O'Neill was disposed to be disingenuous with her grandmother, and to express her desire to remain at home with her in preference to accepting the invitation; but she could not bring herself to utter the words, so remained silent.

"You have no objection, dearest," resumed the Countess O'Neill, "and I am glad of it; for a few days' fresh air will do you good, and tempt you to take exercise."

"I am never so well, nor so happy, anywhere as with you, dear grandmother," replied Grace; and another blush arose to her fair face, which the countess, being short-sighted, did not observe, and concluded that, as hitherto, Grace was unwilling to leave her.

"The Fitzgeralds are so kind to us that I like to oblige them," resumed the old lady, "and I know I cannot confer a greater favour on them than by giving them your company sometimes. I have been thinking this morning about your dress, and Patrick has already had some silks sent here from Miss White's, from which I have selected two gowns, which are now in hand. So, you see, darling, all is arranged for your going; and you will, I flatter myself, be satisfied with the choice I have made."

"You are only too good to me, dearest grandmother,"

said Grace, embracing the countess, who was quite elated at the anticipation of two or three days' recreation for her.

"I wonder will *he* be there?" thought Grace to herself. "Yet why should I think of him? What can it be to me whether he is invited or not? Lady Fitzgerald, or the girls, said nothing of it. If *he* is *not* to be there, I would rather not go. I wish I knew, for I shall be so disappointed if the other officers come and *he* stays away. But I think he is sure to have been asked, for Lady Fitzgerald seemed very much pleased with him. How odd that I find myself thinking so much about him, when, probably, *he* has not bestowed a single thought on me! I must drive him out of my head, otherwise I shall be sure to blush when I see him, and I would not do that for the world. Nothing is so tiresome as to fall into a habit of blushing."

Such were the reflections that filled the mind of the beautiful and artless Grace O'Neill for the next two days, notwithstanding her repeated determination to think no more of Captain Sydney Mordant; and when Honor O'Flaherty came to pay her a visit, and announced that he was to be among the guests at Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's, her resolution of not falling into a habit of blushing did not prevent her cheeks from becoming of a bright rose colour, though luckily for her Honor O'Flaherty happened at the moment to be so occupied arranging an obstinate ringlet before the glass as not to have seen the blush.

"Grace told you, I suppose, dear countess, that she

danced with the two handsomest men at the ball?" said the giddy Honor, "while I was only asked by the ugly ones; and such a conceited fool as one of them was! I should have been bored beyond endurance if I had not, in self-defence, quizzed him all the time."

"How often must I entreat you to leave off this dangerous and unfeminine habit of quizzing, dear Honor?" observed the Countess O'Neill. "It makes enemies, and encourages strangers to take liberties and misjudge you."

"Now don't look so grave, dear countess. I assure you I do all I can to check myself from making game of people; but when I see a conceited fool, who looks down upon the Irish, and gives himself airs, and talks of his father's riches and grandeur, I can't for the life and soul of me help making fun of him."

"It is precisely this habit of making fun, my dear Honor, that gets our countrywomen ill spoken of. I speak to you as I would to Grace, and earnestly advise you to refrain from quizzing."

"I'll do all I can to follow your advice, my dear kind friend, and thank you sincerely for taking the trouble to give it to me; but, in order to keep my good resolution, I hope none of those conceited purse-proud fools will provoke me. I can't, like dear Grace, awe them into respect by dignity and reserve. My face and figure are not formed for it; I have always some nonsense or piece of fun coming into my head, and the least attempt to act the grand with me makes me break out into quizzing those who try it;

but I 'll correct myself, indeed I will," and the good-humoured girl kissed the Countess O'Neill's hand.

"And in anticipation of your keeping your promise, my good Honor, accept the reward," said the countess, drawing forth from beneath the pillow of her sofa a gown-piece, purchased that morning for Honor.

"O! what a lovely, what an elegant dress! Look, Grace, isn't it beautiful?" and Honor, in a state of perfect delight, danced round the room, holding up the dress.

"One of Miss White's young women is now in the house to take your measure for this dress, Honor. Ring the bell, dear Grace, and have her sent up."

"Was there ever such a friend, such a thoughtful, kind, friend?" said Honor. "Isn't it enough to make me conquer my folly, and endeavour to copy Grace's good breeding and reserve, instead of being a madcap wild Irish girl, as I know people have thought, and not scrupled to call me! Your goodness shan't be thrown away; you 'll see, my dear countess, that I'll be an altered person, for such kindness is enough to correct even greater faults than mine;" and tears filled the eyes of the grateful girl.

It was by thoughtful acts of kindness like the one we have noted that the Countess O'Neill rendered herself little less than adored by her, less prosperous neighbours. Mrs. O'Flaherty, a widow like herself, with an only daughter, was reduced from comparative affluence, by the reckless extravagance of her husband, to a stipend so

narrow as to require the strictest habits of economy to keep up the appearance of respectability for herself and her child. Her husband died of a broken heart, when the consequences of his selfish folly were brought before him; and his late remorse had so touched the affectionate heart of his poor wife as to make her forget not only the ill usage he had heaped on her, but the poverty he had entailed on her and their daughter, but to leave her a mourner for the remainder of her days. But poor Mrs. O'Flaherty lived among kind hearts, and the evils of straitened circumstances were lightened by the thoughtful consideration and unceasing attention of her neighbours. Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald never had a sheep killed in his plentiful establishment that a joint or two of it did not find its way to her kitchen, on the alleged reason that he was quite sure her delicate appetite could not endure the coarse meat sold by the butchers at—. The alleged inferiority of the poultry furnished the same excuse for her being constantly supplied with the excellent produce of his poultry-yard. Similar reasons were assigned for sending her butter and cream from his dairy, vegetables from his garden, and fruit from his hot-houses; and such was the tact and delicacy of the worthy donor of these good things, that it was made to appear that anything like a refusal to accept them on her part would be deemed a tacit avowal that she did not admit their superiority to what could be obtained at the common markets.

Another neighbour whose housekeeper had acquired a
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certain fame for preserves furnished, by the order of her employer, Mrs. O'Flaherty's store-closet with an ample stock of jams and jellies; and the housekeepers of some three or four families, urged into emulation by their masters, vied with each other in keeping her constantly supplied with cakes, meat pies, and fruit tarts, so that few persons with triple, ay, quadruple, her income had so good a larder as Mrs. O'Flaherty, who often extended to others as well as to the poor the superfluous good things furnished to her by her generous friends. A pretty dress for Honor, or a better silk gown or cloak or bonnet for both, were the not unfrequent gifts of the Countess O'Neill to her old neighbour and her pretty daughter, whom she often reproved for her too high spirits and propensity to quiz her acquaintances in general, but English officers in particular, when these last excited her ire by their unfeigned wonder or unrepressed smiles at what they termed her *Irishisms*.

Honor's mother, a half-heartbroken woman, who passed three parts of her day in weeping for the loss of the husband who had ruined her and her child, and the fourth in prayers for the repose of his soul, was seldom a spectatress of the *escapades* of Honor, and, even if she had been, was too nervous and timid to correct them, — a fact so well known to the countess that she endeavoured to supply to the wild girl the maternal care, of which she stood in need.

Honor O'Flaherty was to accompany Grace O'Neill to Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's, whose carriage was to be sent to convey them to his mansion. Honor's heart beat quick

with anticipated delight at three consecutive nights' dancing, for it was the custom in that family, as in most others in the neighbourhood, that three dinners should follow each other, after which were to be balls. Patrick O'Donoghue was to take his place on the box, by the side of Sir Geoffrey's coachman, for nothing would induce him to allow his young lady to go even a mile into the country without his protection.

The day arrived for the visit, Mrs. O'Flaherty came to pass the time of her daughter's absence with the countess, an arrangement which generally took place on similar occasions, and, as the carriage containing the two young ladies drove from the door, Mrs. O'Flaherty wiped her eyes, and observed, "What a happy season youth is, when the anticipation of two or three days' amusement can give such joy!"

"Yes," replied the countess, "youth is the time for enjoyment, as age is for reflection."

"For sorrow, my dear friend; for what else can reflection bring to those who, like you and I, have lost the beloved partners of our lives?" observed Mrs. O'Flaherty, applying her handkerchief once more to her eyes.

"It can bring the consciousness of having fulfilled our duties to the utmost of our power, and the hope of meeting hereafter those we mourned."

"Ah! yours is a more hopeful spirit than mine! But you had not passed your youth with your husband, you had not wept for years over his errors, and then seen him

lament their results with an anguish that brought him to the grave, as I did, the recollection of which can never be effaced from my mind. You lost the Count O'Neill ere yet the passion of the lover had faded down into the calmer sentiment of the husband, and you never knew the grief of witnessing his errors, or beholding his remorse."

"Poor woman," thought the countess, "the more faultless was my husband the less she thinks I ought to lament him. But I can overlook the error of a fond heart and meek mind, and pity the sorrow of my poor friend. Alas! the perfection of my first, my only lover, was such as to preclude the possibility of my ever knowing a second passion; and when I think of the noble being, faultless in mind and conduct as in person, to whom I was wedded, and compare him with the half-educated and reckless libertine, whose habits of intoxication and indulgence of low pleasures had alienated him from the good will and respect of all who knew him, I could be angry that his poor widow imagines her cause of sorrow to be greater than mine!" But no symptom of what was passing in the mind was revealed to her poor nervous companion by the high-minded Countess O'Neill, who soothed and spoke words of pity and comfort to her, while other friends could not forbear from questioning the sincerity of a regret so unceasing for an object universally deemed so unworthy of it as the *roué* Philip O'Flaherty. But who shall judge the secret heart, or pronounce whether the faulty are not sometimes as long and as deeply mourned as the faultless?

CHAPTER VIII.

"I HAVE a mind not to go to this old Irish baronet's dinner," said Captain Sydney Mordant to Mr. Herbert Vernon, the morning of the day on which the said dinner was to take place.

"What would I not give to have the power of going in your place," observed the latter, "and of meeting Miss O'Neill, who is to be there? She is by far the loveliest girl I ever saw, and, whatever our countrymen may assert against the want of elegance in the manners of the Irish ladies, I declare that this descendant of the ancient kings of Hibernia is not only the prettiest but the best-mannered girl I ever saw."

"And I quite agree with you in opinion," said Captain Sydney Mordant.

"Then why hesitate about meeting her, when an opportunity is afforded?"

"Precisely because I think so highly of her that she might become very dangerous to my peace of mind. Fancy a poor devil of a younger brother, with only ten thousand pounds in the world to depend on, falling in love with an unportioned Irish girl!"

"Eh bien et après?"

"Either breaking my heart in a hopeless passion, or breaking the hearts of my father and mother by marrying this charmer."

"The alternative, I admit, is not agreeable for a man who loves himself well enough not to be disposed to break his own heart, and his parents too well, to risk wounding theirs. But after all, as your elder brother has married a great heiress, who bids fair to give no olive branches to the genealogical tree of the ancient house of Mordant, I don't see why you, my dear friend, may not be pardoned for pleasing yourself, if you prefer love in a cottage, with such a divine creature as Miss O'Neill, to a marriage *de raison* with the daughter of some rich 'citizen' of credit and renown."

"If one could be sure that these divine creatures would not bestow on one a numerous progeny of paupers, a love match might not be such a desperate affair; but, as poor folk always have more children than rich, the most unthinking fellow must shudder before he entails on himself the chance and misery of offspring, for whom he has no means of providing, and of seeing the woman he loves not only deprived of the elegancies and comforts of life, but depressed by gloomy apprehensions for the well-being of her children."

"The picture is not encouraging, I confess; yet how many persons with a similar one staring them in the face snatch a few months of happiness and bid defiance to the future?"

"Those who do so are either so selfish as to prefer the gratification of their own passions to the happiness of the object, or are incapable of reflection. I am not of these and consequently am afraid of knowing Miss O'Neill better, lest

I might have to undergo a conflict between love and reason, which might prove too strong for the last."

"You are wiser than I am, my dear Mordant, for I, on one point at least, resemble that good saint who called it 'all joy to fall into divers temptations;' not that I, like him, believe I could vanquish many of them, but simply because certain temptations are so pleasant. I wish, therefore, I could go in your place to Ballymacross Castle to-day, and warm myself in the sunshine of Miss O'Neill's eyes."

"And, were my card of invitation transferable, I don't think I would yield it to you on this occasion, my dear Vernon; for it surely would not be acting the part of a friend to expose you to a temptation that I dread to encounter myself."

While the friends were conversing a card was brought to Mr. Herbert Vernon from Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald, requesting the honour of his company at dinner that day, accompanied by an explanatory note of apology, stating that, "through the mistake of a servant, the invitation, which ought to have reached him several days before, was only now forwarded; and hoping that he would kindly overlook the mistake."

"By Jove, just what I wished!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon, throwing the card and note across the table to Captain Mordant. "I dare say the alleged mistake is all a hum, — that I am at the eleventh hour invited to fill up the place of some Banquo whom sudden illness, or dread of a boring party, will keep away. *Reflexion faite*, perhaps the old Milesian,

or his better half, or the young ladies, have only now discovered that I am entitled to have honourable stuck before my name, and have, therefore, sent me what Sydney Smith calls a soup-ticket. If I listened to the suggestion of my dignity I should decline accepting this tardy invitation, but to meet Miss O'Neill is a temptation beyond my powers of resistance, and so I shall go."

"And I also," said Captain Mordant, something like a blush bespreading his face, a suffusion of countenance to which he was by no means subject.

"Now, then, my dear Mordant, let us have a fair start. We have both danced once with this charmer. You had the advantage over me of engrossing her conversation nearly the whole evening of the ball, while I could only hover near her; but now, each for himself, we will start afresh, and by all fair means endeavour to win the prize to which both aspire."

"And, if you should win the lady's heart, are you prepared to demand her hand?"

"Decidedly; and, what is more, I can count on my governor and my mother's consent. Not that they might not blow up confoundedly at first, at the notion of a portionless wife, and an Irish one into the bargain; but, after having fought them into allowing me to enter the army, a measure against which they entertained the strongest objections, I may naturally count on their indulgence in this instance. I have only to be threatened with a pain in the side, and an attack of the chest, if they should evince any obstinacy at first, and they will consent to anything. This is one of the many

advantages of being an only son, my dear Mordant; and inestimable they all are when one happens to have a father and mother who tremble at the bare notion of losing their heir."

"If such are your prospects, Vernon, you will have nothing to dread from any rivalry on my part. I cannot deceive myself into a belief that my father or mother would ever consent to my marrying a portionless wife, though she may claim regal descent from the Kings of Eoghain, and is the granddaughter of the brave and respected Count O'Neill, whose high character reflects honour on his young and beautiful descendant."

Captain Mordant was perfectly sincere when he thus spoke; but when, some seven or eight hours after, he entered the drawing-room of Ballymacross Castle with his friend Mr. Herbert Vernon, and saw Grace O'Neill looking more lovely than ever, a bright blush giving increased lustre to her eyes, he felt it would not be an easy task to refrain from seeking to find favour in those bright orbs. Having paid the customary attention to his hostess and her daughters, he involuntarily turned to look at Miss O'Neill. The blush that had lent her cheeks so bright a hue had subsided, leaving them so transparently fair as to remind him of an alabaster vase through which the light was visible, and he was debating within himself whether her beauty was seen to most advantage when thus pale, or when her cheeks wore the bright tint that coloured them when he entered the room, when a whisper from Honor O'Flaherty to the object of his thoughts once

more brought a rosy shade to her delicate cheeks, and decided the difficult question; for he now thought that he had never previously beheld Miss O'Neill so brilliantly handsome. Perhaps the hasty and timid glance she cast on him while the whisper was uttered had something to do in his decision, and the downcast lids which veiled these soft blue eyes, for some minutes after, confirmed it. What would he not have given to know what the whisper contained which could thus make the lovely girl blush? That it related to him he could hardly doubt, from her having instantly glanced at him. She had blushed, too, when he entered the drawing-room; but as he was accompanied by Herbert Vernon that individual might have occasioned the roseate suffusion. He should have liked to ascertain this point, but how was this to be effected? He saw Herbert Vernon now approach Miss O'Neill, and address her, when she, calm and composed, as if one of her female friends had spoken to her, raised her eyes to acknowledge his salutation; but no change of colour indicated that she felt the slightest interest in the speaker.

"Strange!" thought Mordant, "Vernon did not cause the blush;" and a sensation of pleasure filled his breast at the conviction. "What if I approach and observe whether I may attribute the blush to my presense?" thought Mordant; and, before reason could whisper that such a step would not be in strict accordance with his voluntary avowal to Vernon that he had no rivalry to fear from him, he crossed the room and addressed Miss O'Neill. Before he could utter a single word her cheeks assumed their former rosy tint, leaving him no

longer in doubt that this beautiful change of colour was produced by no other than himself, and delighted at the certainty. Sydney Mordant, although a remarkably handsome man, was so little disposed to coxcombery, that the plainest and most insignificant of his sex, accustomed to receive only cold civility from the young and fair, could not have felt more elated than he did on the present occasion. The reserve of Miss O'Neill towards him was much greater than to his friend Herbert Vernon, with whom she conversed perfectly at her ease, while to him there was a timidity not to be subdued by the efforts of the conscious girl which led him to the rapturous conclusion that she was not as indifferent to his presence as she wished to appear.

The company being now assembled, and the butler having announced that dinner was served, Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald, having offered his arm to an old lady, requested Captain Sydney Mordant to lead Lady Fitzgerald to dinner, and Mr. Herbert Vernon to hand out another lady; after which the rest of the guests, with due regard to etiquette, offered their arms to the rest of the ladies. Heartily did the two honourables of the party regret the aristocratic distinction which deprived them of the power of sitting next the lady who occupied the thoughts of both; and greatly did they envy the men who enjoyed this pleasure, one of whom happened to be Colonel Maitland, and the other Sir Henry Travers. Honor O'Flaherty, seated between Major Elvaston and Captain Sitwell, neither of whom had she ever spoken to before, was as entirely at her ease with them as if they had been old

friends, and both appeared to be very much amused by her lively remarks. Lady Fitzgerald presiding at the top of the table, and Sir Geoffrey at the bottom, were — “on hospitable thoughts intent” — helping white and brown soup, followed by crimped salmon and turbot with lobster sauce, declared by the *gourmands* of the party to be the most delicious they had ever tasted. But these delicacies were replaced by a huge boiled turkey, white as the damask table-cloth on which the silver dish which contained it was placed, and covered with celery sauce; *vis à vis* to which was a smoking haunch of venison, the fat of which did honour to the deer-park of the old baronet; with a ham of no ordinary dimensions, flanked by a pigeon pie of similar proportions and four copious *entrées*. The English portion of the company stared with astonishment at the profusion of the dinner, which reminded some of them of the line in Lewis’s poem —

“The tables they groaned with the weight of the feast,” which was almost literally borne out, for the sideboard displayed a smoking baron of beef, a quarter of cold lamb, a venison pasty, and sundry other dainties, with “all appliances to boot,” calculated to satisfy a good appetite, or excite a jaded one. In vain did Captain Sydney Mordant offer his services to Lady Fitzgerald to help the fish, or carve the turkey or game that succeeded it. The hostess declared that carving was a positive pleasure to her instead of a trouble, and that Irish ladies and gentlemen infinitely preferred the old fashion of helping their guests to the new one adopted in England of having the *relevées* carved by the *maitre d’hotel* on

the sideboard. It is true the flushed cheeks of Lady Fitzgerald, from the operation, — and it was an onerous one, — and her unceasing attention to her guests, exemplified by anxious glances cast around on their plates, and “becks and nods” (though not wreathed smiles) to the attendants, induced a comparison in the minds of some, between the advantages or disadvantages of her discharge of the duties of her social system, or the perfect *nonchalance* with which an English lady sits at her own table, leaving the comfort of her guests to the well-drilled servants, who, placed behind their chairs, glide rapidly and noiselessly as ghosts to supply their wants almost before they are expressed. But the epicurean portion of the dinner party were disposed to admit the superiority of the Irish fashion when they beheld the delicate morsels carved by one who well understood the whereabouts, and how they should be cut, and remembered the jagged lumps or too thin slices — the too much or too little gravy — served to them from the *buffet* of some aristocratic *salle à manger* in England, and consoled them for the trouble their hostess was giving herself by the reflection that she was used to it, and had prepared herself by a copious luncheon for the privation of having no dinner. The wines were pronounced to be excellent, and were as profusely served as the dinner. The claret was found to be of a very different quality from the wine of the same name met at English tables, owing to its not having passed through the spirit-giving medium of the cellar of an English wine-merchant, who prepares it for the taste of his countrymen, while Irish gentlemen import their

own from Bordeaux. Repeated bumpers, pressed on his guests by the hospitable baronet, proved that it was a beverage that "cheered but not inebriated," and reconciled the English portion of them to the want of body or strength, as they termed the mild flavour occasioned by the absence of brandy. The excellence of the viands, the goodness of the cookery — which reminds a gourmet of that of *l'ancien régime* in France, before Paris was filled by hungry soldiers fresh from the battle-field, where the constant smell of gun-powder and scarcity of good food had spoiled the delicacy of the palates of the heroes, and led to the adoption of undue quantities of pepper and onions in the cookery — and the fine quality and liberal quantity of the wines, put the male portion of the guests into such good humour that the most fastidious amongst them were ready to overlook the want of the noiseless steps and precision of attention which distinguish English from Irish servants, who are somewhat prone to run against each other and break china in their zeal to serve the company quickly.

Before the ladies left the dining-room, several vehicles of various descriptions, jaunting-cars predominating, arrived at Ballymacross Castle laden with the persons invited to the ball, and for whose reception chambers were prepared, in which they arranged their hair, put on their dancing-shoes, shook the creases from their dresses, and put on their wreaths and bouquets. Had any inquisitive listener been near the doors of these tiring rooms, into each of which some half-dozen of young and blooming damsels

were crowded, he or she might have been amused by hearing the disjointed exclamations of the occupants.

"Do, dear Bessy, let me peep into the looking-glass."

"In a minute, dear; but first let me see the effect of this flower."

"Bessy has had this same flower in and out of her hair seven times, to my certain knowledge," observed another.

"Do pin my sash, Mary, and I'll do as much for you," entreated a fair plump girl, whose dress only required this adjunct to be completed.

"I declare I have not been able to get a single glance in the glass, and I am sure I shall look a regular Blouza-bella," remarked a sparkling brunette.

"Dear Kate, are you sure that my slip is not longer than my gown?"

"I'll look in a moment; but this ringlet is so obstinate I can do nothing with it; it looks like a broken corkscrew."

The *chaperons* of these sprightly girls were no less busy in an adjoining chamber.

"I declare my bird of paradise is nearly spoiled," said one portly dame of large dimensions while endeavouring to arrange the plume in a *barrette*, *à-la-mode* some ten years before. "My maid put it into the wrong band-box."

"That eternal *barrette* and plume!" whispered a thin withered-looking woman; "how tired I am of seeing it!"

"If it be true, as is said, that birds of paradise never while in life alight on earth, the poor birds are hardly

used when dead, by being made to do duty in the turbans and *barrettes* of half the old dowagers in the kingdom," observed a pretty young matron, *sotto voce*, to another youthful wife.

"How dreadful," exclaimed a rotund lady, "my beautiful point lace flounce is torn in three places! What can I do?"

"Mend it," said the lady to whom the question was addressed.

"How do you think this gold-embroidered scarf looks with my turban?"

"Admirably! you look exactly like Roxalane."

"Much more like Bajazet," whispered the thin lady.

"Had I not daughters to marry I certainly would not expose myself to cold by coming twelve miles to a ball in a jaunting-car," observed one of the elderly ladies, who had hitherto been so busily occupied in arranging her dress as to have wholly forgotten that she had daughters.

"And I also would have remained at home but for the same cause," said another, holding a pocket-glass to a small pimple on her chin, to which she was carefully applying a bit of sticking-plaster. In short, the old ladies were all as intent on beautifying themselves as the young, though without the same excuse; namely, the desire of captivating an admirer who might become a husband. So inherent and undying is the desire to please in the heart of woman, that it outlives every rational motive, and must be, we suppose, like "virtue, its own exceeding great

reward," for the efforts never after a certain age meet with gratitude from that sex to please whom they are generally made.

The junior officers of the — Regiment not included in the invitation to dinner were asked to the ball, it being thought advisable to provide partners for all the young ladies, which without the presence of these gentlemen it would be difficult to do; besides, as Lady Fitzgerald observed to her hospitable husband, a due sprinkling of red-coats among so many blue and black ones had always a good effect; and so it proved when the ball-room was thrown open, for nothing could look more gay than the white dresses and bright flowers of the young ladies, and the uniforms of the officers, while the old ladies formed a parterre of what, in Ireland, are termed wall-flowers.

CHAPTER IX.

"You will oblige me, Captain Mordant, by opening the ball with my eldest daughter; and you, Mr. Herbert Vernon, will dance the first set with my second, Florence," said Lady Fitzgerald.

"What a bore!" whispered Mr. Vernon to Mordant, "just as I had made up my mind to dance with Miss O'Neill. This is the price of our dinner, I suppose."

Mordant envied Sir Henry Travers when he saw him lead the fair object who occupied all his own thoughts to the dance, but remarked with a selfish satisfaction, that

the countenance of Grace denoted no pleasure on the occasion. Grace stood next Miss Florence Fitzgerald in the set, which allowed both her admirers an opportunity of studying her beautiful face and figure. Sir Henry Travers seldom removed his eyes from her, but it was evident that she was more annoyed than gratified by his admiration.

"Poor Grace O'Neill will be bored to death by her stupid partner," said Miss Fitzgerald to Captain Mordant. "He is desperately smitten, and I suspect means to make his proposal in due form to-night."

"Has he any chance of success?"

"What a question! It is one, however, that you would not ask if you knew Grace as well as I do; for she is not a girl to be influenced for a single moment by his ten thousand a year, although *he* believes few girls could resist such a temptation."

"Men capable of forming such an opinion of your sex, Miss Fitzgerald, do not deserve pity when they find themselves mistaken."

"Look at him! how intent, yet how foolish, he seems. Grace looks vexed. He bites his lip and grins, and, — yes, yes, I am sure, — as we Irish say, he has popped the question. Grace looks grave and dignified, as she always does when she wishes to put an end to a subject. Yes, he has received his *congé*. Fool! he urges his suit again. It's no use. See how angry he is! how he frowns! Grace looks more cold and stately than before; she

speaks to him; and now he knows that all his pleadings are vain."

Mordant was deeply interested as he watched the scene pointed out to him by his partner, whose praises of Miss O'Neill had given him a favourable opinion of her. He wondered not that Grace should, without a moment's hesitation, refuse to accept such a suitor, for he considered it little less than an unpardonable impudence that such a man should presume to lift his eyes to so superior a creature; but he remembered how many girls he had seen gifted with beauty, of high birth, and not deficient in fortune, accept with outward complacency, whatever might be their internal feelings, the proposals of men who had no recommendation whatever except a certain number of thousands a year, and he thought the more highly of her that she was not one of those worshippers of gold. Had he only one quarter of the fortune of Sir Henry Travers, how readily would he lay it at her feet, and how ardently would he implore the consent of his parents to present them with such a daughter! A deep sigh broke from his heart, little in unison with the gay scene around him; and Miss Fitzgerald remarked to her sister Florence, when the *contre-danse* was over, that, "although Captain Sydney Mordant was a peculiarly well-bred man, he was not a lively partner."

Mr. Herbert Vernon lost not a moment in seeking Miss O'Neill's hand for the next dance; and Mordant, whose eyes involuntarily followed her, thought, — but it might

only be fancy, as he admitted to himself, — that she looked disappointed, and once glance over at himself.

“There can be no harm in asking her for the third dance,” thought he. “It would be really too great a sacrifice to refrain from dancing with her at all;” and, having come to this decision, he watched her movements, admiring their grace and elegance, and, above all, the air of dignified but cold politeness with which she received the animated attentions of his friend Herbert Vernon. Never had he seen Vernon so intent to please, and never had he seen him less successful in his efforts. A faint smile, or a nod of assent or dissent, was all he could obtain from his fair partner; and the frank and open countenance of Vernon revealed disappointment when, the dance being over, he led Miss O’Neill to her seat. Mordant, fearful that she might be engaged again, hurried to entreat her hand for the next set, and, as he urged his request, observed with a thrill of delight passing through his heart, as a sunbeam penetrates through foliage, that a bright blush coloured her cheeks. Yes, *this* time he *could not* be mistaken, he was too near her, and there was nobody else in proximity to whose account he could attribute this change of colour. A beautiful smile followed it while she made the admission “that, although somewhat tired, she would dance the next set with him.”

“Not for worlds if you are fatigued,” said Mordant; “I am not so selfish as to desire a pleasure at any risk of fatigue to you.”

Grace thanked him only by a sweet smile. "It would be difficult in England to see so many beautiful faces collected together at a country ball," observed Mordant, "as I have noticed to-night."

"Are you quite sure of this?" replied Grace, archly, "or may I not attribute the compliment to your desire of pleasing me by praising my friends and countrywomen?"

"There is only one thing I would not do to please you, Miss O'Neill, and that is to say what I did not think."

"If it be a weakness, I confess to it," — and here another blush passed over her lovely face, — "but I do like to hear my countrywomen praised. They have been so often disparaged by strangers, their artless gaiety mistaken for levity, their frankness for boldness, that I am glad when they are well spoken of; and, although you have referred only to their personal attractions, I assure you their mental ones, when known, merit esteem."

"Were I to judge all by *one* admirable specimen," — and here Mordant raised his eyes to the face of Miss O'Neill, — "I would readily give them credit for the possession of every charm and of every virtue."

Grace blushed again, but this time no smile followed the bright tint, and Mordant saw that his implied compliment had offended the delicacy of her to whom it was addressed.

"What an agreeable man Colonel Maitland is!" observed Grace, after a pause in the conversation that made Mordant feel ill at ease.

"He is an excellent as well as an agreeable man," replied he, "and we look up to him as to a father."

"The daughter and granddaughter of soldiers, I feel a particular interest in men of his age and standing, for such I think my father might have been had it pleased Heaven to have prolonged his life."

The pensive expression of her lovely face as she uttered this sentence lent it a new charm, and her low sweet voice well accorded with it.

"Colonel Maitland would be flattered if he knew the favourable impression he has made on you, Miss O'Neill," said Mordant, anxious to break the train of sad reflections into which the fair girl was falling.

"I am not so vain as to think so. Of what value to a man of his age and experience could the opinion of a person so youthful and inexperienced as I am, be?"

"It must be valuable to every man," was the reply.

"Pardon my frankness, Captain Mordant, and permit me to tell you that, if *you* attach any value to my esteem, you will refrain from compliments direct or *indirect*," — and here she blushed again, — "for I never can divest myself of the notion that those who utter them have formed a low estimate of her to whom they are addressed."

Mordant was about to utter something to deprecate this belief, when Grace raised her head and said, "Not another word on the subject of compliments, lest you add to your sin of flattery."

"Fool that I was," thought Mordant, "not to have

seen at once that this lovely creature was too superior to the generality of those of her age and sex to receive praise with complacency. I have injured myself in her opinion by having tried such old and stupid means of conciliating her, as might please other women, and she has given me a lesson not soon to be forgotten."

"I am, then, to suppose, Miss O'Neill, that Colopel Maitland addressed no compliment to you?" resumed Mor-dant, desirous to break the silence that followed her re-proof.

"He paid me the most delicate of all compliments — that of taking for granted that I did not like them, and of speaking to me as he would have done to my grandmother."

At this moment Honor O'Flaherty approached Miss O'Neill, and, with a very arch expression of countenance, whispered, but not low enough to be inaudible to Mor-dant, "So, Sir Henry Travers has popped the question, I find, and got the belt, as he deserved?"

"Pray be silent, Honor. Such matters should never be talked of; and I can't conceive how you should know anything about it."

"You forget, Grace, that you happen to have a very speaking face; although your tongue is none of the most communicative, perhaps on the principle of compensation. Florence Fitzgerald, who, like me, has plenty of time on her hands to observe the love-making of men to other girls, because she has no similar occupation of her own,

told me that she saw the whole scene, from the first introduction to the last sentence."

"I assure you that there is not the slightest chance of my ever changing my mind. Honor, I must insist that you will say no more on this subject."

"Not quiz him a little on his disappointment?"

"Not on any account, dear Honor; as your doing so would really offend and pain me."

"What a sensible and high-minded creature this is!" thought Mordant. "Inherent tact and delicacy have done the work of time, and a long habit of living in the best society, in forming her mind and polishing her manners. There is a modest confidence, founded on self-respect, in her that charms me; for, while it has conquered all the *gaucherie* peculiar to extreme youth and want of *les usages du monde*, it has not impaired, in the slightest degree, that feminine reserve which is one of the greatest attractions in a youthful maiden."

"Oh, Grace! I have had such a sparring match with Mr. Hunter," said Honor O'Flaherty, aloud. "Now, don't look so horrified, dear Grace. You could not appear more shocked if I had clawed, instead of quizzed, him."

"How can you persist in this odious habit of quizzing, Honor — a habit so wrong, so unfeminine?"

"You begin to scold me without knowing the extent of my sin against feminine propriety;" and the wild girl drew up her lips, and looked demure, in imitation of what she termed Grace O'Neill's prudery. "Before you condemn

me you should hear my crime. You must know that Mr. Hunter did me what I dare say he considered an honour, that of asking me to dance; and I was taken so unaware, and I suppose was so overcome by the favour, that I consented to his request. But no sooner had we danced down the first set than he began to compare the grandeur and elegance of England in general, and of his father's portion of it in particular, with the poverty and uncivilization of poor Ireland, — a subject so unpalatable to me, that I am apt to lose all self-control when it is persisted in, that I could not resist the temptation to hoax him."

"Hoax! what a word, Honor!" said Grace O'Neill.

"A very good word, for anything I can see to the contrary, Grace. Why, I hear all our male acquaintance use it frequently."

"Can I never make you understand, Honor, that words which may be permitted to men are not precisely what women should utter?"

"Do hear this modern Mrs. Primmer lecture me, Captain Mordant," said Honor, turning to that gentleman. "Is it such a shocking word after all?"

The half-contrite and half-comic countenance of the lively girl who appealed to his opinion overpowered his gravity, and he yielded to something more than a smile till, reproved by a glance at Miss O'Neill's serious face, he checked it, and admitted "that the word in question was more suited to male than female lips."

"What a hypocrite you are, Captain Mordant! You were ready to burst into a hearty laugh when Grace's solemn face alarmed you out of it; and, to please her, you pass sentence against my good and expressive word 'hoax.' But I must finish my story about Mr. Hunter. I assumed a very innocent countenance, and told him I thought he must be a very condescending person to come to such a poor vulgar country as Ireland, and to dance with girls like myself, when by throwing up his commission he might remain in England, where there was no poverty, nor vulgarity, and where he might dance with Lady Marys and Lady Augustas at every ball. He seemed quite pleased, and said he did it for his country's good. 'You are not only a soldier, but a patriot,' observed I, 'and it is no wonder that the Irish ladies, who admire bravery and patriotism, think highly of you.' 'Do they, indeed?' inquired he, pulling up his shirt collar and glancing at the large looking-glass near us. 'Well, 'pon my honour, I am ready to allow that, though the Irish ladies have not the polish, the elegance — in short, the *je ne sais quoi* of the English, they are, nevertheless, very fine girls.'

"How proud they'd be if they knew you think so!"

"O! I assure you I have told my opinion to several of my brother officers."

"I hope it won't get known to my poor countrywomen, for it would turn their heads, and encourage them all to fall in love with you."

"Honor, can it be possible that you compromised the

dignity of your sex in this dreadful manner?" demanded Grace O'Neill, her face flushed with shame.

"To have them *all* in love with me would be too much of a good thing," said the vain fool; "but I should not be sorry to make an impression on the hearts of a few."

"I have played my part so well," continued the arch girl, "as to make him believe that not only I, but half my female friends, are deeply smitten with him, and have left him in a fool's paradise of pleasure."

"Honor, I am seriously angry with you for thus letting down the dignity of our sex for the puerile amusement of the moment, and for drawing on us all the impertinence of this foolish young man. What must he think of us?"

"I flatter myself that he is now thinking of me only, for my flattery has proved such a good bait that he has swallowed it, hook and all; and, if I don't play with this odd fish for my diversion, as the angler does with a large one that he has safely hooked, my name is not Honor O'Flaherty."

Grace O'Neill looked so much ashamed and distressed, that Captain Mordant, though really amused by the comic manner in which Honor O'Flaherty related the scene with Mr. Hunter, did not indulge his risible muscles, and promised his fair partner that, should Mr. Hunter repeat the flattery administered to him by her friend, *he* would make his brother officers understand that Miss O'Flaherty was only amusing herself at the expense of his vanity and credulity, while the incorrigible Honor entreated he would

not spoil her joke, the *dénouement* of which she declared she felt assured would be charming; and, then seeing how much displeased Grace was at her levity, she walked away, saying that "some persons made harm out of every bit of fun, and looked shocked about trifles."

"She is a good-hearted girl," said Miss O'Neill, "but allows herself to be carried away by her wild spirits and love of fun, — besetting sins with too many of my youthful countrywomen, and which give rise to the most erroneous opinions to their disadvantage."

Had Captain Mordant been a vain man, the desire evinced by Miss O'Neill that her countrywomen should not be misjudged by him, and the displeasure she betrayed at the giddiness of her friend, might have struck him as originating in a peculiar desire to prove to him that she was too superior to the generality of Irishwomen to be capable of the errors she so severely reprehended in one of them. But he was not a vain man, and truly appreciated the motive of her conduct, which he felt quite persuaded sprung only from a purer sentiment. The extreme delicacy of mind and decorum of manner of the Countess O'Neill had taught her granddaughter to shrink with dismay from the somewhat coarse mirth, and desire of exciting it, so prominent a defect in many of her young countrywomen, and she would have felt as desirous to see them more dignified and refined, for their own sakes, as for hers. But, shocked herself by every proof of levity and want of maidenly reserve on their parts, her sense of propriety rendered her

aware of the evil impression such follies were calculated to make on strangers; — hence the lovely Grace O'Neill was somewhat disposed to fall into an opposite defect of manner, by becoming as formal as her companions were the reverse.

CHAPTER X.

THE following day a portion of the junior officers of the — Regiment were invited to Ballymacross Castle, it being by no means the intention of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald and his lady to confine their hospitality to the senior ones, while these last were engaged to the ball which was to follow in the evening, and the other half of the juniors were to dine with the baronet the third day, their superior officers being again engaged for the third ball. Thus three gala days, as the giver termed them, followed each other, a mode of displaying hospitality frequently adopted in Ireland. At each of these balls Miss O'Neill was the partner alternately of Captain Sydney Mordant and Mr. Herbert Vernon, both alike smitten with her, but with very unequal chances of winning her affection, her preference being wholly accorded to the first, although she as yet knew not how deep was the impression made on her heart. Never had that young and innocent breast previously harboured so dangerous a guest as love; consequently she was not aware of the extent of his power until, on taking leave of her at the conclusion of the third ball at Bally-

macross Castle, Captain Mordant, with an involuntary sigh, remarked to her that "the last three evenings had been the happiest of his life, but would render future solitary ones more insupportable," when a pang at her heart told her that she too would find her quiet evenings at home less happy than previous ones.

"How much I should like to have the honour of being presented to the Countess O'Neill," said Mordant; "may I, Miss O'Neill, entreat that favour from you?"

Grace blushed and faltered as she promised to ask permission from her grandmother, but added that she so seldom formed any new acquaintance that she hardly hoped an exception to the rule of seclusion made by her grandmother would now be accorded.

"But may I call at your door?" inquired Mordant.

Another blush, and a gentle assent, sent Mordant back to his quarters more in love, yet less unhappy, than before.

"Was there ever a more beautiful creature than Miss O'Neill?" demanded Herbert Vernon, as he and Mordant drove away from Ballymacross Castle after the last ball.

"Never," was the sole reply.

"I feel over head and ears in love with her, Mordant, but cannot flatter myself into a belief that my suit would ever prove successful, however warmly urged. Yet when I think to what a comparatively brilliant destiny I could elevate her by making her my wife, and transporting her from this wild and comfortless country to the stately home and abundant luxuries in which it abounds, which will one

day be mine a latent hope springs up in my breast that she may be induced to accord to my position and prospects that which no stretch of my vanity could lead me to think she would concede to myself. Before I had seen Miss O'Neill, had any one told me I could ever bring myself to sue for the hand of a woman who loved me not, and who only accepted me for my prospects, I should have pronounced such a supposition not only an insult but an impossibility; nevertheless, such is the revolution produced by an all-engrossing passion, that pride, self-respect, all, all, yield to its influence; and I am weak — mean enough, to be ready to accept with joy the hand of her whose heart I may never be able to touch."

Herbert Vernon hid his face with his hands, while his deep sighs revealed the extent of his emotion.

"This passion is of so recent a date, you know so little of her who has excited it, that a little reflection, and an avoidance of Miss O'Neill's society, may enable you to conquer it, my dear Vernon."

"And can you, Mordant, imagine that she is one of those women who, once loved, can be so easily forgotten?"

Mordant's heart prompted a ready reply, but he forbore to utter it, for it would have entirely coincided with the sentiments of his friend; so he affected to make light of the subject, and said, "You know the lines, Vernon —

'None without hope e'er loved the brightest fair.'

"Yes," replied Vernon, interrupting him, "and the next line, which applies to me —

‘For love will hope where reason would despair.’

Yes, such is precisely my state. The reserve and coldness of Miss O'Neill convince my reason that I have no cause for hope, yet the syren still cheats me."

"But this is not your first passion, Vernon; and, as a former one has subsided, may not this also fade away when no food is given for its maintenance?"

"This, though not the first, is, I feel, the only real passion I ever knew. It is as different from the former one as the object that has created it is superior. O! Mordant, if she showed only half the pleasure when I approach her that she evinces when you do I should be the happiest man alive!"

"Surely you are mistaken, Vernon. I assure you I have never had the slightest reason to think that I have found more favour in her eyes than you have."

"And I, fool as I am, have let you into the secret! Have I not seen her blush whenever you drew near her?"

"Miss O'Neill is only lately introduced even into the narrow circle here, which its inhabitants designate the world, or, more properly speaking, society. She is naturally shy and prone to blush, as is generally the case with persons of her age and sex who have never mingled in more extended circles."

"So I might suppose if she blushed when other men approach her, Mordant; but I have watched her narrowly, and never have I seen the least suffusion of her cheek, ex-

cept when your presence, or the mention of your name, produced it."

How rapidly throbbed the heart of Mordant, and how delicious were the sensations he experienced, as another confirmed the belief *he* had previously hardly dared to indulge, lest vanity might have misled him. He could have embraced Vernon, so transported was he by his words; but the recollection of his own dependent position, and the conviction that never would Lord and Lady Fitzmordant consent to his marrying the object of his attachment, damped his transitory happiness.

"Perhaps, Mordant, if you were to plead my suit with Miss O'Neill, and let her know what my prospects are, the certainty that my father and mother would receive her on whom the happiness of their only son depended with open arms, and tell her all the good you know of me, she might be disposed to listen to my proposal?"

"But might not a compliance with your desire, Vernon, expose me to the danger of forming an attachment which, in my peculiar position, must be a hopeless one? Miss O'Neill is not, I confess, a person with whom any man with a disengaged heart could come in frequent contact with impunity."

"You feel, you admit this, Mordant. Ah! yes, I was right in my supposition when I guessed that you are already, perhaps unconsciously, smitten with her who has captivated me."

"I will be frank with you, Vernon. I am not indifferent
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to the charms of Miss O'Neill; nay more, I never felt so lively an interest in any woman before; but, as I never can hope to call her mine, I am not so selfish as to wish to entangle her affection, or to prevent her from listening to your suit; believing, as I firmly do, that with an honourable, kind-hearted, and good-tempered fellow like yourself she would have a fair chance of happiness."

"My dear Mordant, I can never forget your conduct on this occasion," said Herbert Vernon, clasping the hand of his friend. "Judge, then, how strong is the affection which would lead me to seek the possession of her hand, even though assured that with it she could not bestow her heart. This is being selfish — mean — whatever you like to designate it; but, knowing that I would devote my life to making her happy, that my father and mother would act as the tenderest parents to her, that my friends and connections would become hers, I cannot but hope that I might in the end acquire the affection I would give worlds to possess."

"But are you not premature, Vernon, in declaring your attachment? Consider you have known Miss O'Neill little more than two or three weeks, and out of three weeks have spent only four evenings in her society, and those in crowded balls."

"Mordant, your blood is colder than mine, if you can think that it requires a longer time than four evenings for a creature so lovely in person and admirable in mind as Miss O'Neill to captivate a heart like mine."

Mordant felt his own heart too profoundly touched to deny the truth of the assertion of his friend, and when the carriage stopped at the barracks, and they separated, he heartily wished that Vernon had not made him his confidant, nor asked him to plead his cause with Miss O'Neill; for, as a man of honour, he felt bound to serve his interest, however painful to his own feelings. Men are so often the dupes of their own hearts, that who shall say that, in accepting the trust imposed on Mordant by his friend Vernon, he was not unconsciously influenced by the desire of facilitating occasions of interview with the secret object of his own affection which might furnish opportunities of becoming better acquainted with her? Reason sometimes warns mortals that certain results are likely to spring from certain causes, and they, admitting it, form resolutions not to let such results occur, believing that they can always avert them. Nevertheless they do not adopt the wise course of avoiding the cause of the effect they dread; namely, of shunning the object with whom they know their peace might be in danger; and, determined not to risk her happiness and their own by an ill-assorted marriage, they fearlessly rush into danger by interviews which feed the flame of affection, until it becomes torture to separate from her they love, and they end by the marriage, which, at the commencement of their passion, they determined on never forming. Well may this weak conduct be compared to the infatuation of flies, who hover around a flame, which first singes their wings without teaching them to avoid it, and ends by their total destruction.

Mordant was kept awake for some time by certain qualms of conscience, as to the propriety of his own conduct. Was it right for him to seek opportunities of becoming better acquainted with the qualities of a creature so irresistibly charming, that even on so short an acquaintance with her he felt that his heart was no longer free, certain as he must be that the more he knew her the stronger must his attachment prove? But as he believed the danger would be confined solely to him, that there would be no risk to her (for the part he had undertaken of pleading the suit of another must lead her to think that he had no views for himself), the desire of seeing her blinded him to the possible or probable consequences, and silenced his scruples. There would be, as he said to himself, always time to withdraw from her presence when he should find he could no longer master his feelings; and with this vain belief he at length sank into slumber, to dream of her who occupied all his thoughts. Had Mordant been a vain man it might have occurred to him that the peace of the beautiful Grace O'Neill might be endangered by frequent interviews with him; and he was so honourably disposed that such a possibility would have prevented him from seeking them; but he was really so free from vanity, the besetting sin of the generality of young men, that it never did occur to him; hence he believed that he risked only his own peace when he sought to become better acquainted with her.

The following morning, at breakfast in the mess-room, the hospitality of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald and the balls of

the preceding three nights, furnished the universal topic of conversation.

"There were, I admit," said Colonel Maitland, "a number of very pretty girls present; but Miss O'Neill is, in my opinion, so infinitely superior to them all, that she totally eclipsed them. Her manner, too, is so distinguished, so perfectly lady-like, that I could do nothing but admire and wonder how in this wild country she could have acquired such ease and elegance."

Herbert Vernon looked triumphantly across the table at Mordant, and, encouraged by his colonel's praises of Miss O'Neill, mentally applauded himself for having selected her as the object of his affection.

"For my part," observed Mr. Hunter, "I think Miss O'Flaherty quite equal to her, though in another style."

"Yes, a very different style, I grant," remarked Lieutenant Marston; "Miss O'Neill resembles a fine Arabian horse, and Miss O'Flaherty a capital hackney."

"But how comes it, Hunter, that Miss O'Flaherty has found such favour in your sight of late? The other day you spoke slightly of her."

"I didn't know her then," replied Mr. Hunter, "but, now that I do, I think her one of the most agreeable girls I ever met."

"I confess that I think all the Irish young ladies we have seen remarkably handsome, and, although not quite as polished as our English ones, far more pleasant and piquante," said Captain Sitwell.

"Their freedom of manner somewhat shocks one at first," observed Major Elvaston "We Englishmen are not accustomed to have young ladies shake hands and welcome us as cordially on the second interview as if we were old and privileged friends; but this freedom extends no further, and I have a strong notion that any one presuming on it to take the slightest liberty would find himself severely reproved."

"Or laughed at, which would be, perhaps, the more mortifying check of the two," said Captain Sitwell.

"The characteristic features in the manners of Irish women seem to me to be little changed since Lord Chesterfield, when Viceroy of Ireland, pronounced his opinion of them," observed Colonel Maitland. "His lordship, than whom there were few better judges of women, said that the Irishwomen looked less correct than English ones, but were in reality more so."

"Although I will not admit that any women can be superior to those of our own country," remarked Captain Sitwell, "I nevertheless am attracted by the artless gaiety, the buoyant spirits, and unceremonious cordiality of greeting of the Irish ladies, who, unconscious of evil in others, because they are conscious of none in themselves, like frank and lively children, are ready to amuse and be amused with others."

"I agree with you," said Mordant, "and believe that the ill-natured comments sometimes called forth by the

natural vivacity of Irishwomen wholly originate in the ignorance of those who utter them."

"With every inclination to judge fairly of the ladies of this side of the water, I confess," remarked Colonel Maitland, "that I would prefer to see them resemble Miss O'Neill a little more, who, free from the formal and conventional reserve of our Englishwomen, is equally so from the too vivacious and demonstrative freedom of the Irish."

CHAPTER XI.

"AND so, darling, you enjoyed your three days at Ballymacross Castle?" said the Countess O'Neill to her granddaughter as they sat together at tea the evening of the return of the latter from her visit to that place.

"Yes, dearest grandmother; and I should have enjoyed them much more did I not remember how much you would miss me, and that my pleasure was purchased at the expense of your comfort."

"Why, I must confess, Grace, that poor Mrs. O'Flaherty is not precisely the person to fill your place, or make me forget your absence. Nevertheless, I got over the three days tolerably well, for the hours, whether agreeably or disagreeably passed, still fleet on; for, alas! there is no casting anchor in the stream of time."

"I feared poor Mrs. O'Flaherty would *envenom* you. She sometimes has that effect on me, she is so childish."

"I have been endeavouring to reason with her on the folly of encouraging Honor in her wild spirits and reckless habit of bantering, which must present a great obstacle to her being happily settled for life, this last point being, as I was well aware, the only one likely to make an impression on her. To dwell on the impropriety of Honor's doings and sayings in any graver light than their injurious effect on her matrimonial chances would have been utterly unavailing. But her poor, weak-minded mother assured me that she relied wholly on the very points in her manner to which I objected for her achieving conquests, and would not on any account check or change her. She quoted to me, as examples illustrative of the truth of her theory, the good marriages formed by all the wild and giddy girls of our acquaintance, and the failure of the grave and steady ones in securing husbands. 'You have heard,' said she, 'the old saying, that there is a God who watches over the safety of drunken men. So, I am persuaded, there is a Providence for wild girls; and, as I have instilled into Honor's mind that her first consideration in life must be to get a husband, you will find that, either by bantering or quizzing in her own wild way, she will carry her point when people least imagine it probable.' It was in vain that I tried to make her sensible of the evil of thus training her daughter to become a husband-hunter, and of its debasing effects on her mind. I could produce no good by my representations; and I really pity the poor girl, who finds in her own mother the worst adviser she could have. But you have

told me none of the particulars of your balls. Who did you dance with?"

"Captain Mordant and Mr. Vernon."

"The same gentlemen, if I remember rightly, with whom you danced at the ball here?"

"Yes."

"Are they agreeable and sensible men?"

The countess turned her eyes towards the face of her granddaughter, and was surprised to see it suffused with a bright blush, while the artless girl seemed at a loss to frame a reply to so simple a question.

"Mr. Vernon," at length, said Grace, "is very gentlemanlike."

"And Captain Mordant, is he less agreeable than you thought him on the first night of your acquaintance?"

"Oh! no, he is even more so;" and a deeper blush followed the former.

"Then you prefer him to Mr. Vernon, is it not so?"

"I hardly know; that is, perhaps he is the most agreeable of the two; but really, dearest grandmother, on so short an acquaintance it is not easy to pronounce."

The Countess O'Neill felt certain that Captain Mordant had made some impression on the heart of her granddaughter. Her blushes, her hesitation, convinced her of it; and an involuntary sigh broke from the breast of the fond and anxious parent at the discovery that her darling Grace could no longer, as hitherto, expose every thought of her pure

mind to her. She now almost wished that she had not let her go to Ballymacross Castle, to be again exposed to the attentions of Captain Mordant. "And yet," reasoned the admirable woman, "it is the destiny of the young and fair to win affection, and to respond to it. Who is there here among the young men of my neighbourhood to whom I could wish to see the happiness of this dear girl confided? or who could appreciate her as she merits to be appreciated? I must see this Captain Mordant; must study his character, and judge whether he is worthy of the affections of my treasure. And yet may I not confide in the delicacy of her taste, the purity of her mind, and that intuitive sense of what is estimable, which have always characterized my child, for taking for granted that no man but one of superior qualities and attainments could make an impression on her?"

While these reflections were passing in the mind of the Countess O'Neill, Grace bent over a drawing she was making, occasionally lifting her eyes to the face of her grandmother with a mingled expression of curiosity and timidity. How should she ever, without betraying a trepidity that might reveal her emotion, repeat the request of Captain Mordant to be permitted to pay his respects to her grandmother? How foolish it was of her not to have mentioned the request when her grandmother had inquired about him! That was the moment to do so, and she had allowed it to pass; and he would be sure to call the next day, she felt certain he would, and her grandmother would think it odd, and he, too, must think it very strange, that he was not

admitted; and yet how could he be let in if she did not ask permission of her grandmother? Yes, *he* would be sent from the door, would probably feel mortified; and all this would be her fault. How could *she* be so foolish, so nervous? She never was so before; and what could be more simple than repeating his request? She cleared her throat two or three times to speak to her grandmother, but a sense of suffocation prevented her from speaking.

"Have you caught cold, darling?" inquired the countess, somewhat alarmed.

"No, dearest grandmother, only a slight huskiness in the throat, which is now quite gone."

"I was thinking, dearest, that, though I do not like seeing strangers, I should be glad to receive a visit from your two partners."

"Which reminds me," said Grace, blushing up to her very temples, "that Captain Mordant asked me to obtain your permission to receive him."

"I must give instructions to Patrick to admit him, darling, so ring the bell;" a command which Grace obeyed with alacrity.

The countess insisted on her granddaughter going to bed unusually early that night, to make up for the fatigue of the three preceding ones; and we do not exaggerate when we assert that the mind of the old lady was almost as much occupied by Captain Mordant, whom she had never seen, as was that of Grace herself, to whom his image was perpetually present. How sweet were the dreams of the lovely girl that

night! She seemed to listen to the tones of that musical, yet manly, voice as it breathed vows of love in her enraptured ear, and vowed eternal constancy. She walked with him in beautiful gardens, by murmuring fountains; and he told her that he now loved for the first time, and entreated a return of his passion. She essayed to speak, but could not, and he accused her of cruelty, when, placing her hand in his, she felt him cover it with kisses; and she awoke to find it fondly pressed by her grandmother, who was bending over her couch.

"I came to see how you slept, darling," said the countess, "and when I approached you put forth your hand to meet mine, and seemed so happy that for a moment I believed you were awake; but when I looked more closely I saw that you still slept."

For the first time in her life Grace reflected some minutes on what dress she should wear that day. She first decided on putting on her best and most becoming morning dress; but then came the thought that her grandmother might think it strange that she wore it, and attribute it to the true cause, the wish of appearing to advantage in the eyes of Captain Mordant. No; she would wear a dark silk dress. It is true her grandmother often told her she looked best in light colours, and therefore she was tempted on this occasion to attire herself in a robe of grey poplin. But no; on reflection she would wear a dark gown, with white collar and cuffs; that would look less pretentious, and lead to no suspicion of her wishing to appear to more than usual advantage that

day. The dark robe was put on, and well it fitted the exquisitely-formed bust and slender waist of its beautiful wearer. The snowy whiteness of the collar and cuffs was peculiarly becoming to the fine complexion of Grace; and the small feet and delicate hands peeping forth from the dark robe would have proved to the most prejudiced Englishman that ever touched the Hibernian shore that an Irishwoman might have as small feet and hands as the most aristocratic dame that England had ever given birth to.

Never previously had Grace looked so frequently in her mirror as on this morning, and never had she been less satisfied with the image it reflected. Never vain, she was on this occasion so much the reverse that she really persuaded herself into a belief that she was rather plain than good-looking: a fact so extraordinary that we fear few of our female readers will give credence to it, but which was, nevertheless, perfectly true. At three o'clock a knock at the hall-door announced a visitor, and in a minute after the sound of ascending steps was heard. Grace half rose with the intention of looking in the glass, but, recollecting herself, sat down again; and a bright blush overspread her cheeks, whether from a latent dread that her grandmother might have suspected the motive of her half leaving her seat, or from pleasure at the visit she was about to receive, we are not prepared to decide. The door of the drawing-room thrown open by Patrick, Captain Mordant entered, while his name was pronounced, and Grace presented him to her grandmother, with certain irrepressible indications of per-

turbation which she would have given much to conceal. The fine figure, handsome and intelligent face, and, above all, the air *distingué* of Mordant, made a most favourable impression on the Countess O'Neill; while the suavity of his manner, and the deferential tone he adopted towards her, soon banished the constraint and ceremony which generally attend a first visit between total strangers. The conversation was chiefly maintained by the countess and Mordant, who were mutually pleased with each other, Grace only occasionally joining in it; and when, after a visit of an hour, Mordant arose to depart, entreating permission to renew the privilege of calling sometimes, and of presenting his friend Mr. Vernon, Grace thought that half an hour instead of a whole one could not have elapsed.

"But why should he wish to present Mr. Vernon," thought Grace. "I wish he had not asked grandmamma, for now Mr. Vernon will always be sure to accompany him when he comes here, and his presence will spoil all the pleasure of Captain Mordant's visits, at least to me."

It was Sterne who said that "a man has seldom an intention of making a woman an offer of kindness without her having a presentiment of it some moments before." This female instinct, young and inexperienced as Grace was, had led her to form a notion that Mr. Vernon regarded her with a more than ordinary interest. But so little of a coquette was she that, far from this suspicion affording her any pleasure, it really was disagreeable to her, and she would gladly have avoided giving Mr. Vernon any opportunity of re-

suming his attentions. Now, however, the Countess O'Neill having accorded her permission to receive him, Grace felt certain that he would avail himself of it much more frequently than would be acceptable to her, and determined to discourage him as much as was consistent with good breeding.

"What a remarkably gentlemanlike man Captain Mordant is," remarked the countess. "He is very good-looking too, and, unlike the generality of his sex, does not appear to be too well aware of this fact. A vain woman is bad enough, but a vain man is still worse. You expressed yourself so coldly about Captain Mordant's personal advantages that I was not prepared to see so handsome a man."

Grace had lately fallen into such a habit of blushing that her grandmother, who had observed it, was not very much surprised at seeing her fair cheeks glow with a bright but evanescent hue when she addressed this remark to her, and was almost tempted to smile when, in reply to her observations, Grace uttered something about the difference of opinion often entertained about good looks.

"You surely don't mean to say that you consider Captain Mordant otherwise than handsome, darling?" said the countess, amused by the disingenuousness of her granddaughter, prompted by an incipient affection and maidenly shyness. Her own experience of the feelings peculiar to a first attachment had taught her to comprehend those of Grace. She well remembered that, although naturally of a most frank and open disposition, and fondly devoted to



her own mother, how disposed she was to conceal from that dear parent the state of her heart until the demand for her hand from Count O'Neill justified the preference she had conceived for him, and truly sympathized with Grace on the present occasion. Nevertheless, she was not indisposed to indulge a momentary *espéglerie* at her expense, certain that it would not be long ere Grace would confide to her maternal breast the only secret of her heart.

"Am I, then, to understand that in this instance, Grace, your taste and mine do not agree? ' inquired the Countess O'Neill.

"No, dearest grandmother — that is to say, yes;" and the lovely girl blushed to her very eyes. "I think Captain Mordant very good-looking; but as I am not much of a judge of good looks, at least in men, I did not know whether you might think him so, and so —"

"And so, darling, said the Countess O'Neill, interrupting her, "you were afraid of compromising your good taste by declaring your opinion. In this case, however, it was safe, for none could deny the personal attractions of Captain Mordant." And then, changing the subject to an indifferent one, the countess relieved her sensitive granddaughter from the embarrassment under which she was labouring, leaving her happy in the belief that her secret preference for Captain Mordant was unsuspected, while to the Countess O'Neill it was as fully revealed as if Grace had confessed it. "Poor dear child," thought she, "I must

not attempt to gain her confidence on this point until her delicacy is relieved by an avowal of his affection. Then, I am sure, she will open her heart to me."

CHAPTER XII.

IF Mordant was deeply smitten by the beauty, unaffected modesty, and charm of manner of Grace O'Neill when seen, as hitherto, only in the blaze of a brilliantly-illuminated ball-room — a light so favourable to female beauty that, even after its first freshness has somewhat faded, it seems to recover its pristine bloom — how much more did he admire her when he beheld her in the bright sunshine of a clear and cheerful day, that true test of youth and beauty, which leaves not the slightest defect concealed, while it brings out the charm of a fine complexion? She struck him as being even more lovely than he had previously thought her, and, notwithstanding his resolution not to yield up his heart, he was more in love with her than ever. The extreme neatness of the house in which she resided, the simple elegance that reigned throughout the room in which he had been received, vouching for the intellectual and feminine occupations of its inhabitants, was in perfect harmony with their appearance. Books, flowers, a pianoforte, a frame on which a piece of embroidery was strained and half finished, from a beautiful drawing placed on an easel near it, formed a little picture to which the elderly and youthful lady gave the finishing touches and

animation. Never did age appear more venerable or more respectable than in the Countess O'Neill. Tall and slight, with finely-formed features and a delicate fairness of skin, a strong resemblance existed between her granddaughter and her. Attired in black silk with a white crape collar and cuffs, and a widow's cap, which had never been abandoned since the death of her husband, she wore her silvery hair, of which she had a profusion, separated, à la Madonna, on her forehead. Those rich tresses, which sorrow had rendered prematurely grey, had once been as black as those of her granddaughter, but no attempt to conceal this mark of age had ever been made; and, as Mordant contemplated her countenance, he thought those snowy braids lent a peculiarly touching character to her pale but fair face. Reclined in an ebony easy-chair, with dark velvet cushions, a small table, on which was placed her Bible, close to her, Mordant thought her the most interesting-looking woman he had ever beheld, and just such a one as Vandyke would have liked to paint. Her small and finely-shaped hands resting on her black dress reminded him forcibly of a charming picture by Vandyke of one of his female ancestors, who, like the Countess O'Neill, had never changed her widow's dress for any other. This portrait he had often admired in the stately gallery of his father, and, now that the original seemed to stand before him, he felt that the appearance of the grandmother of Miss O'Neill, even in the most fastidious and courtly circles, must command respect. Who that looked on this venerable woman, whose

beauty Time had touched and mellowed without defacing, and then glanced on the lovely creature in the bloom of youth and beauty near her, but must have felt assured that, when years had dimmed the lustre of her charms, she should grow into the perfect likeness of her grandmother, only changing one character of beauty for another? Mordant thought of women of a certain age in high life in England, to whom Time, in proportion as he took away their comeliness, bestowed increase of embonpoint until they wished their "too solid flesh would melt," and who with tresses only become their own by right of purchase, and, "by using all other appliances to boot," vainly endeavour to repair or conceal the ravages of the inexorable tyrant, looked such vile caricatures of human beings as had often made him turn with distaste from some plump young beauty, a daughter or granddaughter of these moving masses of flesh; in whose pretty faces might be traced a resemblance to the puffed ones of their mammas or grandmammas, shuddering at the thought that such might these Hebes hereafter become. But the lover of Grace O'Neill who could aspire to her hand might anticipate the effect of Time on her without distaste or dread when he looked on the face and figure of her grandmother.

It had struck Mordant more than once that Miss O'Neill had not the slightest portion of the Irish accent, and he found that the countess was equally exempt from this national peculiarity, while almost all the persons in Ireland with whom he had associated hitherto possessed it in a

very striking degree. Their utter freedom from the accent of their country greatly gratified him, for it seemed to his fastidious taste that any touch of it would have impaired the refinement and elegance which he considered so indispensable in women. When he left their house he encountered Mrs. and Miss O'Flaherty, who were approaching it.

"Give me leave, Captain Mordant," said the latter, "to introduce you to my mother."

The old lady, with a very strong Hibernian accent, declared she was "mighty pleased to become acquainted with the captain, and hoped he would sometimes look in and pay her a visit; though she led a very lonely life, and would be moped to death only for the constant good spirits of Honor. Good spirits were, indeed, a great blessing; but, for her part, *she* could not be expected to have them, after having lost a husband," and here she drew out a cambric handkerchief and applied it to her eyes, "for whose loss she never could be consoled."

"That will do, mother," interrupted Honor. "Don't bother Captain Mordant about a loss that happened so long ago, and which, after all, if what you have told me be true, was no loss at all."

"Honor! Honor! what can you be thinking of, to speak so disrespectfully of your own father, who is now in heaven? Don't mind her, captain; she is a wild, giddy girl, that doesn't know what she is saying half her time."

"There's a pretty character to give a poor girl! Isn't

it?" said Honor, with a comic expression of countenance. "It's easy to see, mother, you don't want to get me married off your hands, when you tell all my faults to the first stranger you meet in the street. But Captain Mordant is a good creature — are you not?" smiling at him, "and won't let out a word of all this to any of the marrying men in his regiment, and in return I'll put in a good word for him whenever it is required."

"Will you hold your tongue, you madcap? Sure there's no keeping you quiet," observed Mrs. O'Flaherty; but, though her words were meant to reprove her giddy daughter, her eyes were turned to her with an expression of pride and complacency that betrayed her admiration of her.

"My mother will be very glad to offer you a cup of tea and a bit of hot slim cake any evening that you have nothing better to do with yourself. Won't you, mother? And if you bring a certain young officer with you, the first letter of whose name is Hunter, I will engage to make you laugh."

"How often have I told you, Honor, that I can't bear your humbugging young men as you do?"

"Would you rather that they should humbug me, mother? Because, if that's the case, I'll be as innocent as a lamb, and believe everything they tell me,"

"Was there ever such a girl in this world! Sure what I want is not to have any humbugging at either side. When I was young, no genteel or well-brought-up girl would attempt to quiz or humbug. It would be considered very

wrong. But you take after your poor father who is now in heaven, and who was everlastingly quizzing and hoaxing every one he met with. Sure even I, his own lawful wife, he never could let alone; but used to bother me by making me believe black was white, and laughing at me after. God forgive him." And Mrs. O'Flaherty again drew forth her handkerchief and applied it to her eyes.

"God knows, mother, there 's no pleasing you any way," said Honor, archly. "You are crying now because you haven't my poor father to humbug and make game of you, yet when I try to follow his good example you complain."

"Well, well, it 's of no manner of use reasoning with you, Honor; but don't let us keep the captain standing in the street. Good morning, Sir. I'm mighty proud to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and if poor Mr. O'Flaherty, God rest his soul, was now alive, he 'd be very proud to invite you to dinner, for he was very fond of company," and the speaker's handkerchief was once more applied to her eyes. "But he 's in heaven."

"Where I am afraid he can't have the pleasure of the captain's company," added Honor, demurely as she and her mother walked away.

"How can Miss O'Neill, with her refinement and delicacy, be so partial to that wild, coarse-minded girl?" thought Mordant. "It really is disgusting to see that she cannot spare even her own mother, who, however ridiculous she may be, ought to be respectable in the eyes of her

daughter. Then to hear how she utters pleasantries on subjects that should ever be sacred! I wish Miss O'Neill saw less of her, for Miss O'Flaherty seems always out of her place when she is in the society of one so immeasurably her superior."

While Mordant was thus soliloquizing he encountered Herbert Vernon, who, too impatient to await his return to the barrack, had come forth to meet him.

"How long you have stayed, Mordant," said he. "I began to think you would remain all day at the Countess C'Neills, and feared you thought more of gratifying your own feelings than of consulting mine during this visitation."

"You wrong me, Vernon. I *did* think of you, and have obtained permission to present you to the Countess O'Neill."

"But did it require such a prolonged visit to effect this?"

Mordant saw that his friend was piqued, and, feeling that in a similar case he, too, might have been impatient, related to him the interview with Mrs. and Miss O'Flaherty which had occasioned his delay in returning to the barrack.

"Strange to say," observed Vernon, "I left that foolish fellow Hunter declaiming on the charms of this same Miss O'Flaherty, who has certainly succeeded in making a deep impression on his vanity, if not on his heart."

"An appeal to a man's vanity is often the shortest and surest road to his heart," replied Mordant; "but, foolish as Hunter is, I don't think he can be caught by this wild

girl. Only fancy his bringing such a wife to Wintern Abbey. What a blow it would be to the *millionnaire* and his wife; and what a fertile field for her favourite amusement of quizzing the retired manufacturer and his spouse would it furnish their hopeful Hibernian daughter-in-law!"

"But you have told me nothing of the lovely Miss O'Neill and her grandmother, Mordant. Do tell me every particular. Is their home *very* Irish? And is the old lady what one is prone to imagine an old-fashioned Irish lady must be?"

"Quite the reverse of the caricatures which are brought forward on the stage in England, and which we English take for granted must be faithful pictures of Irish life."

"And to which, if I may credit what I have heard, some striking resemblance may still be found. Mrs. O'Flaherty, *par exemple*."

"Yes, I must confess Mrs. O'Flaherty is very Irish and very absurd. The Countess O'Neill is one of the most distinguished women in appearance, and the most ladylike in manner, I ever saw any where; and, like her fair granddaughter, has not the slightest accent of her country."

"*Tant mieux, tant mieux*, my dear fellow; for one would not like to have to blush for one's wife's family. But Grace, who may truly be said to be a fourth Grace if not a tenth Muse, how does she bear daylight and sunshine, — I mean, how does she look of a morning? So many women who appear young and beautiful as Houris in a well-lighted ball-room look like faded flowers the following

morning at breakfast; and, as I hold it an essential advantage in wedded life to have my wife preside at the matinal repast, I should like her not to appear less fresh and white than the delicate roll which is to tempt my appetite. A very homely comparison, you will say."

"You can judge for yourself to-morrow, Vernon, for I will present you, and you will then concur in opinion with me that a fairer, fresher face never confronted the light of day than Miss O'Neill's."

"O! Mordant, how happy should I be could I but hope to call this lovely creature mine! Heigh-ho! How little did I think when we marched into this dull town that I should ever contemplate marrying one of its fair denizens! I would have wagered hundreds against the possibility of such an event, yet here am I now so far gone in love that the bare thought of becoming an unsuccessful suitor fills me with fear."

"Are you quite sure that you do not exaggerate your feelings, Vernon?"

"What a question! But what puts such a notion into your head?"

"Your anxiety about Miss O'Neill's appearance by daylight, and her grandmother's claims to distinction. A man deeply in love would not, according to my notions, attach such importance to these points."

"You don't mean to say, Mordant, that if you found the lovely nymph beheld at a ball, a mere mortal, faded

and unhealthy by daylight, or even worse, coarse and red-faced, that your passion would know no diminution?"

"My admiration might decrease, but not my passion, if I had, indeed, formed one."

"Mine, too, would, I am sure, resist such a trial of its force; nevertheless I confess that I am not sorry to be spared it; for the beautiful Grace has so often been present to my imagination, seated at my breakfast-table, attired in a snowy *déshabillé*, her shining raven tresses braided around her classically-shaped head, her milk-white throat encircled by delicate lace, which in my eyes enhances the charms it shades, her small white and dimpled hand pouring out my tea, while her fairy-like foot, in its Cinderella-sized slipper, rests on a *tabouret*, and peeps forth from the soft white drapery which falls around it, that she is more identified, in my mind, with this picture than with any other my fancy can form."

A deep sigh from Mordant was the only comment made.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE officers of the — Regiment found themselves engaged in a round of dinners, which, if they wanted the refinement and elegance peculiar to those given in England, abounded in viands of the best quality, with wines rarely to be met even in the most aristocratic circles of their native land, and, above all, crowned by a warmth of welcome which even the most fastidious agreed in thinking

was more exhilarating to the spirits of the guests than the coldness and reserve which characterize dinners given in country quarters in England. To be sure the dinner-tables were crowded not only by the visitors assembled around them, but by the quantity of good things literally heaped upon them; for, according to Irish hospitality, that virtue in which few, if any, of its inhabitants are deficient, there cannot be too many pleasant persons around the board, nor too many good things set on it. Often was recourse compelled to be had to side-tables, for the supernumerary guests sure to assemble on occasions where the host and hostess, "on hospitable thoughts intent," seldom failed to extend invitations to some six or eight persons more than their largest dinner-table could accommodate, on the alleged plea that *all* who were asked might not come. Some one might be called away, others might be indisposed, and a death or marriage among the relations might prevent others from being present. Thus, on the contingency that some three or four of the invited guests *might* not be able to come, as many more were engaged to fill their places; and not to extend hospitality to any chance visitor who might unexpectedly arrive at the houses of the families first invited was a proceeding so wholly out of the question as never to be thought of. Hence two, and even three side-tables, were not uncommon at dinner parties, where the perfect consciousness that, however numerous might be the guests, there would be ample food for all, prevented the hosts from feeling any uneasiness. The gaiety and frequent

explosions of mirth at these dinners, although they surprised the English portion of the company, accustomed to the reserve and somewhat formal gravity and decorum of English dinners, nevertheless produced a sympathetic cheerfulness in them; and, while they admitted that the Irish were a wonderfully sprightly people, these last declared that Englishmen only required to live a little with the Irish to become capital fellows, and admirers of good jokes. Even the proud-looking young Irish fox-hunters and hare-hunters, whose *disinvoltura* style of sitting their horses when leaping over stone walls, wide ditches, and stiff fences that might have made even a Meltonian stare, became on friendly terms with the officers, whom they no longer suspected of a disposition to quiz them, and good-naturedly offered to show them as much sport as their woods, fields, mountains, and rivers could afford; and the officers in return invited them to breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners at their mess. In short, in the course of a month or six weeks a frequent interchange of hospitalities, most freely given and as cordially received, had established a very friendly understanding between all parties; and sorry would both have been had the — Regiment been removed from their present quarters. Often were the officers induced to smile as they perused the letters of their relatives from England, filled with expressions of pity and sympathy for “the poor exiles in Ireland,” as they were termed. Lady Fitzmordant was almost lacrymose when she wrote to her son Mordant on the hardships of his fate in that dread-

ful wild country, where he could have no society, or at least none worthy of him; and mentioned the fêtes lately given at Fitzmordant Castle, in honour of the presence of royalty, as a contrast to the uncivilized state of vegetation to which he, poor dear fellow! was condemned. Lady Melboro hoped her dear son would not expose himself to the danger of colds in that damp climate, which the Dowager Lady Snowhill had told her had caused the loss of the use of his limbs to a relative of hers, who had merely passed a few hours up to his middle in a river there, fishing, on a very cold day; and Mrs. Hunter advised her son never to venture out after dark without a guard of soldiers, as she heard that all who were so foolhardy as to neglect this precaution were sure to be murdered by the wild *Hirish*. She added a strict injunction to avoid *Hirish* ladies (if, indeed, there were any ladies in such a barbarous country), for she remembered that an *Hirish* kitchenmaid, whom the housekeeper at Wintern Abbey had once been so foolish as to hire, had got tipsy and abused every one, which led her to conclude that all Irishwomen were prone to indulge in strong liquors, which was said to be the cause of their high spirits.

"I wish the old girl had not such a strong prejudice against the Irish, or *Hirish*, as she terms them," muttered Hunter to himself, as he laid down the letter; "and also that she would not *aspirate*, or, as a fellow of my acquaintance once said, exasperate, her h's so much, or rather not put h's in where there ought to be none. What a con-

founded funk she and the old governor would be in if I were to marry Honor O'Flaherty! Their anger, however, would only be like a fire made of straw, hot for a short time, — and soon over. But I have not yet made up my mind to that, although it has occurred to me more than once; and, after all, I might do worse, for Honor's a devilish fine girl, full of fun and up to everything. What rare sport we should have, for she longs to gallop across the country, clearing hedges and ditches! What ridicule she would cast on our fellows who set up to quiz and hoax me! By Jove! she'd have the best of it, for I never saw a girl with such ready answers on every subject as she has. Well, if, after all, I *should* end by marrying her, which, if I find I cannot do without her, I will, I can tell the old boy and girl at Wintern Abbey that if I haven't brought a fortune into the family I have brought an Honor. Hah, hah! not so bad a joke. That would make Honor herself laugh if I told it to her."

So great was the impatience of Mr. Herbert Vernon to be presented to the Countess O'Neill, that he called on his friend Mordant the following day two hours at least before the usual time for paying morning visits, and Mordant had some difficulty in preventing him from presenting himself at the door at one instead of half-past three o'clock, the time at which the countess was generally visible. The emotion of Vernon as he took a seat by Grace was so ill-concealed that her grandmother soon perceived it, and noticed at the same time that Grace was by no means gra-

tified by his attention. The perfect indifference she betrayed when he addressed her was so unlike the blushing timidity she evinced when Mordant spoke to her, that the Countess O'Neill became convinced that the suspicions she had previously formed of her granddaughter's growing partiality for the latter were well founded. This belief induced her to study more attentively the character and disposition of Mordant; and, as she conversed with him on various topics, she discovered, with pleasure, that the gentlemanly manners and good sense which in their first interview had won her favourable opinion were based on qualities which, even in conversation, revealed the high and moral cultivation of his mind. She observed that often did his glance turn to Grace with an expression of no common interest, while his conversation was addressed almost exclusively to herself. When Mordant arose to withdraw, his friend seemed disposed still to linger, as though he could not tear himself away from Grace; and when he approached the Countess O'Neill, and solicited her permission to renew his visits, there was a trepidity and anxiety in his manner that denoted the deep importance he attached to obtaining this privilege, and the gratification he experienced at its being accorded to him.

"Mr. Herbert Vernon appears to be a very gentleman-like young man, and is very good looking," observed the Countess O'Neill.

"He does not strike me as being anything very remarkable, dearest grandmother," was the reply.

"I had no idea that my Grace was so fastidious! Compare Mr. Herbert Vernon with any, or, indeed, all, the young men of our neighbourhood, and he must gain by the comparison."

"Perhaps so," answered Grace, carelessly.

"But," resumed the countess, "as you have hitherto only seen the young men in our neighbourhood, over whom you admit this young Englishman has a superiority, how can you say that you think there is nothing very remarkable about him?"

Never did Grace regret the unaccountable propensity to blushing which had lately evinced itself so much as at this moment, when she *felt*, rather than saw, that her grandmother's eyes were fixed on her face; and felt, also, that her cheeks were glowing.

"Perhaps, dear grandmother," said she, after a pause, "it is because I never rated the young men in our neighbourhood very highly, that, while admitting Mr. Herbert Vernon's superiority over them, I am not disposed to estimate his advantages as anything remarkable."

"I was right in my conjectures," thought the Countess O'Neill, and a deep sigh unconsciously followed the admission. "My precious child," thought the countess, "your gentle and artless heart has received its first tender impression, an impression which, if I may judge by my own experience, will be indelible. Oh! may Heaven grant that he who has awakened affection in it may reciprocate the sentiment in all its force, and be free to claim that dear

hand as its reward. How many solitudes spring up in the maternal breast when a mother first discovers that her child loves! And am I not a mother? ay, and more than a mother, for all the tenderness I felt towards my sole child, the mother of my precious Grace, is added to the affection I feel for her, dear and endearing creature! But who, with a disengaged heart, could see without admiring, could know without loving and esteeming her? She is not rich, it is true; nevertheless, she cannot be termed poor; and I have brought her up so free from expensive habits and tastes, that the fortune I can bequeath her, small as it might appear to a person accustomed to luxury, will be sufficient, — ay, amply sufficient, — to satisfy her wants, and prevent her being deemed portionless as the wife of a *cadet de famille*, though it might not be thought large enough to entitle her to wed the elder branch of a noble family. With such a man as Captain Mordant my child would, I am sure, be happy; for, short as our acquaintance has been, the impression he has made on me is so favourable to him, that I should be indeed greatly disappointed were I to discover anything to his disadvantage. There are some persons whom, even on a slight acquaintance, we are ready to pronounce to be worthy of our esteem, and this Englishman is of the number."

Such were the thoughts that occupied the Countess O'Neill, as she sat reclining in a *bergère*, her eyes fixed on her granddaughter, who had resumed her pencil, and who, unconscious that her grandmother was regarding her,

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was intent on the drawing she was sketching. A message from Mrs. O'Flaherty, to request the loan of a book, caused the countess to send Grace for it to her chamber, and during her absence the countess walked to the table, and glanced at the drawing, when, to her surprise, she beheld two or three sketches of the head of Mordant, so strikingly like as to leave no room to doubt for whom they were meant. Never had the countess previously seen any attempt at portraiture made by her granddaughter, her drawing being confined to landscapes and flowers, in the representation of which she excelled; but here was the proof of a new talent; and, as the Countess O'Neill examined it, she felt convinced that deep indeed must be the impression made on her grandchild's heart when from memory alone she could so accurately portray the features and expression of one known only so short a time. She returned to her seat when she heard the returning footsteps of Grace, reluctant that the sensitive girl should know that she had seen the sketches; and when she saw her resume her task, and, when concluded, consign the paper into a portfolio, she was glad that Grace had not found her examining it, and not the less so as she remembered that hitherto all Grace's drawings were submitted to her inspection. •

"Dear, dear girl! a change has already taken place in that youthful mind, and she is no longer quite at her ease with me. But this was to be expected; and I must not feel the decrease in her confidence as if it originated in a decrease of affection."

The seclusion in which the Countess O'Neill had lived since the death of her husband, and the constant contemplation of the exquisite but too brief happiness she had enjoyed from the moment of her union until that event, had kept alive the freshness of her feelings long after age might have been supposed to have chilled them. This freshness of heart enabled her to enter into, and sympathize with, the emotions of her granddaughter, and, as she compared them with those which she herself had formerly experienced, she read, as in an open book, all that was passing in the guileless heart of Grace, verifying the truth of the line, "He best can paint them who has felt them most," only substituting the word "imagine" for "paint." Little did Grace guess, when she surreptitiously removed the paper on which the drawings of Mordant were sketched from the sitting-room to her bedchamber, that she might gaze on the resemblances free from observation, that her grandmother had already seen them and recognised the likeness; much less did she expect that her secret feelings were divined by that fond heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE visits of Mr. Herbert Vernon to the Countess O'Neill became as frequent as was consistent with the respect which that lady knew so well how to inspire and maintain. He was fearful of presenting himself too often, lest it might

not be agreeable to her; and while he put this constraint on his feelings, believing that he was not passing the limit dictated by *les bienséances*, when he presented himself twice a week at the countess's door, instead of every day, as his heart prompted, the countess felt certain that a more than ordinary interest drew him to her house. Often did he turn his steps to her door, and involuntarily raise his hand to the knocker, when, recollecting that he had paid a visit the previous day, he withdrew his hand, and walked away. He was in the habit of frequently passing by the house, although not encouraged by the hope of beholding the magnet that drew him there in the window; for Miss O'Neill, unlike too many of her countrywomen living in a street, never looked out of windows, thinking that they were formed solely to admit light and air, while so many of her young female friends seemed to think that they were only meant to exhibit their fair faces to the passers by, and, to prevent the said passers by from suffering any disappointment, generally stationed themselves at the windows of their abodes while they pursued their usual avocations. This habitude was peculiarly distasteful to the Countess O'Neill, who had early impressed her opinion on her granddaughter; hence not only did Grace carefully avoid the casements, but white muslin curtains so closely shaded them that not even a shadow of the occupants of the chambers could be revealed to any person in the streets. "Where can she walk?" would Mr. Herbert Vernon say to himself; "I never by any happy chance meet her; yet, surely, she must go out for air and

exercise, or she would not look so blooming. How I should like to know in what direction she walks."

The gentleman was not aware that an extensive garden which appertained to the house of the Countess O'Neill, and which was surrounded by a high and close hedge of privet and boxwood, offering as impervious a screen as a wall of ten feet high would have done, enabled Grace to enjoy air and exercise in perfect privacy; and here, too, her grandmother was rolled around in her garden-chair whenever the weather permitted.

"I find there are two very good parties in the — Regiment," said Lady Fitzgerald during a morning visit which she paid to the Countess O'Neill. "One is Mr. Herbert Vernon and the other is Mr. Hunter. Mr. Herbert Vernon is the only son of Lord Melboro, a very rich nobleman; and Mr. Hunter is also an only child to the modern Cæsus, who has amassed such an enormous fortune by the cotton manufacture, of no family to be sure, quite a *parvenu*; but few mind that now-a-days, when money is everything. I had written to England to some friends of mine to learn every particular about the officers, and have received answers. Captain Mordant is only a second son, and his elder brother is married. My correspondent has not yet ascertained whether this brother has a son, for that, you know, would make a great difference in the case; but the other two officers would indeed make unexceptionable matches, and really these are not times to neglect any opportunity that offers of disposing of one's daughters to advantage."

"But don't you think, my dear Lady Fitzgerald, that it is better to leave all these matters to chance?" observed the Countess O'Neill.

"To chance!" reiterated Lady Fitzgerald. "You would not say so if you spent every season in London as I do, and saw how mothers there exert themselves to procure matches for their daughters."

"I should not like a child of mine to owe a husband to any such exertions," was the reply.

"If all mothers were of your opinion there would be fewer marriages every season, I can assure you, for men now know their own value, and are very wary about being caught."

"Which is the inevitable result of the exertions you mention. Were men allowed to seek instead of being sought they would be more disposed to wed."

"I doubt it. They are so apathetic, so engrossed by their clubs, their horses, their pleasures, that they postpone all thoughts of marrying from year to year, thinking that it will always be time to marry when satiated with the enjoyments of which they are in possession. No, no; mothers now require no inconsiderable degree of address to bring about marriages for their daughters, however handsome the girls may be; and, as to plain girls (and here the speaker sighed), she must indeed be a Proteus in talent who can secure husbands for them."

"Were I in such a position," observed the Countess O'Neill, "I would not make the attempt; for what chance

of happiness can a wife have whose husband has been manœuvred into marrying her?"

"Quite as much as if he had married her for love. In both cases the results are the same. The man who marries for love in a certain time becomes tired of his wife, and, as he married to please himself, neglects her for the same cause; while he who has been manœuvred, as you term it, into marrying, entertains so much less affection on entering his conjugal career, that a good understanding is more likely to be maintained through it. The pair expect less, and consequently are less disappointed."

"But surely no right-minded girl would marry a man whom she did not prefer to all others, and whom she did not believe preferred her?"

"Perhaps not if she had a fortune. But what are poor girls with small portions, or, worse still, none, to do? Live as pensioners on an elder brother, whose wife, hardly tolerating their presence, makes them feel how distasteful it is to her; or live — or rather say, starve — on an income insufficient for any of the comforts of life — nay, for almost the necessaries."

"You have drawn a gloomy picture, and, for poor girls situated as you have described, I must admit that marriage becomes indispensable. Nevertheless, even to accomplish this desired end, I am still of opinion that the less parents interfere to bring it about, the better is the chance of success, and the less likely is the husband to reproach his wife for the match into which he may have been entrapped."

"Entrapped, my dear Countess O'Neill, is a harsh term, and I don't think it applicable to the aids contributed by parents to marry off their daughters. Dinners, balls, water parties, pic-nics, and riding parties promoted by mothers, and which draw young people together, can hardly be stigmatized as traps."

The Countess O'Neill smiled, as was her wont, when she saw persons objecting to certain terms while pursuing the very line of conduct designated by them — persons who objected not to the thing but to the name.

"You smile, my dear friend," observed Lady Fitzgerald; "you may do so, for your granddaughter is differently placed. She has great beauty and peculiar fascination of manner. You have, I doubt not, secured her an independence which exempts the necessity of husband-hunting, while my girls, with but a few paltry thousands — three at the outside — all the estates being entailed on their brother, will become little less than paupers after the death of their parents should they not find husbands. In our neighbourhood we have no marrying men; or, at least, none who would marry girls without fortunes. Not that our countrymen are more selfish or avaricious than Englishmen; *au contraire*, in my opinion, they are much less so. But we know that their estates are so encumbered, as almost all Irish estates are, that it would be little short of madness in them to wed without finding money sufficient to clear some of the encumbrances. I have taken my daughters to London season after season, have gone to fashionable watering-places until

their faces are as well known as here, without having succeeded in establishing them. Their father blames me for the expenses so uselessly incurred, and threatens to prevent our going to England any more; so that I turn to the present chance with a faint hope of securing them husbands. At all events I must leave nothing undone to draw the two individuals, Mr. Herbert Vernon and young Hunter, to my house; and, should an occasion offer, I trust, my dear countess, that you will impress these gentlemen with a favourable opinion of my girls. A good word from a person so esteemed and respected as you are might do much. But — hush! — I hear my girls, with Grace, returning from the garden.”

“It is too absurd, I can’t believe it,” said Miss Fitzgerald, as she was entering the drawing-room, accompanied by her sister and Miss O’Neill.

“What is too absurd, my dear?” inquired her mother.

“Nothing less than Honor O’Flaherty, who has been walking with us in the garden, having assured us that she has made a conquest of Mr. Hunter.”

“Of Mr. Hunter!” exclaimed Lady Fitzgerald, her countenance betraying that this intelligence afforded her great dissatisfaction. “I can’t believe it; for she does nothing but ridicule and quiz him, and I never heard of a man being quizzed into falling in love.”

“I think it is only one of Honor’s *hoaxes*, as she terms all attempts to impose on the credulity of her acquaintances,” observed Miss Kate Fitzgerald; “for, although Mr. Hunter

does not seem to be very wise, I don't think he can be quite so foolish as to select Honor O'Flaherty for a wife."

"But he may admire her without any such serious intention," said Lady Fitzgerald. "A flirtation got up with a pretty girl, coquettish enough to encourage him, and too wild and inexperienced to be aware of the evil consequences of such unguarded conduct, is a very different thing from a matrimonial project."

"Poor Honor, I hope she will not allow herself to be made a fool of. I must really advise her on this subject," observed the Countess O'Neill gravely, "for her mother, I am sorry to say, has but little influence over her."

"For my part, I think Honor is more likely to make a fool than to be made one," remarked Miss Kate Fitzgerald, "for she is a very cunning girl, and having, as she herself confessed to us half an hour ago, determined on securing a husband, will not stop at trifles to accomplish her aim."

"Well, we shall see, we shall see," replied Lady Fitzgerald, evidently piqued and alarmed at the notion that her own schemes to secure Mr. Hunter as a husband for one of her daughters, was likely to be endangered by the ambitious projects of Honor O'Flaherty, whom she had hitherto considered by no means a rival to be dreaded for her young ladies. "It is true," thought she to herself, "Honor is, I must confess, infinitely better-looking than my girls, but she is so untutored, so very *Irish*, that I should think an Englishman would be more shocked than attracted by her wild spirits and *brusquerie*, while my daughters have ac-

quired the reserve and *bien-séances* peculiar to English girls accustomed to fashionable society in London. *Mais qui sait?* Perhaps it is the constraint imposed by their adoption of English manners, which, like a tight dress, to be worn only on state occasions, sits awkwardly on them, that has deprived them of the sprightliness and vivacity which they formerly possessed, and which, in my opinion, rendered them more attractive. However this may be, certain it is that they approach that age which, once passed, terribly diminishes the chance of girls getting married; and, although we have spent more money in dinners and balls than was prudent, considering the expenses of my son's contested election, not a single offer of marriage has been made, and Sir Geoffrey grows very testy and reproachful of late whenever bills are sent in. Yes, I must make some efforts without delay to bring on flirtations, and not allow my plans to be defeated."

Such were the reflections which filled the mind of Lady Fitzgerald as she and her daughters were returning to Ballymacross Castle, in no very good humour; and the result of her cogitations was a consultation with her ladyship's liege lord on the best mode of carrying on the campaign against the liberty of the Hon. Mr. Herbert Vernon and Mr. Hunter, whose hearts were no longer free.

"You are wrong to fill the house with pretty girls, my dear Martha," observed the baronet, "when you invite the officers here. It is a bad policy I assure you, for men *will* make comparisons between girls when opportunities

are afforded them, and our daughters, we must allow, are much less good-looking than could be wished."

"They certainly are not beauties, it must be owned, and I'm sure I can't guess who they take after, for I, when a girl" — and here the speaker drew herself up and glanced in an opposite mirror — "was among the favourite toasts in the county."

"Perhaps, my dear, it was the being so much toasted that made you so brown," observed Sir Geoffrey, a wicked smile playing about his mouth; for the baronet, be it told, could not resist a joke, though even at the expense of his friend or wife, and was not particular whether it was of ancient or modern origin.

"Thank you, Sir Geoffrey, thank you," replied his *cara sposa*, growing red in the face. "If *your*" — laying a peculiar emphasis on the word *your* — "daughters were as good-looking as I was at their age they would not now be unmarried. But, unhappily for them, they do not in the least resemble me, or any of my family."

"They take after me, I suppose," observed Sir Geoffrey, "though, as I was fair-complexioned and flaxen-haired, and they are *brunettes*, I can't see the resemblance."

"But I had such a peculiar transparency of complexion, such beautiful hair, such bright eyes, and such remarkably fine teeth; none of which advantages do *your* daughters possess, Sir Geoffrey, that no man with eyes in his head could say that they bear the slightest resemblance to me. Look at my portrait: that proves the truth of my assertions."

"Not at all. The artist who painted it was known to flatter his sitters to the most absurd degree, so much so that few could recognise the slightest likeness between the originals and their pictures; and I remember when the portrait in question was sent home, all our visitors used to inquire whom it was meant for."

"On the contrary, every one declared it to be a very unfavourable likeness, and blamed the artist for not having rendered me justice. *Your* portrait was, I admit, grossly flattered; yes, Sir Geoffrey, grossly, however surprised and incredulous you may look, for it represented you with a fair complexion, instead of a nankeen-tinted face with straw-coloured hair, and totally left out the brown freckles which always made your face look like a turkey egg."

"Yours, at this moment, my dear, is — but no, I will not say what it resembles. I leave personalities to you, Lady Fitzgerald; but let me tell you that, if you had been as candid thirty-five years ago as you have now proved yourself, you might have longed for turkey eggs and nankeen all the days of your life, without my furnishing them."

"Who provoked me, Sir Geoffrey, I should like to know?"

"And who begun, Lady Fitzgerald? Do you ever call my girls '*your* daughters' except to remind me that they are *mine*, because they are plain? On every other occasion you speak of them as if they belonged only to you."

And off walked the baronet, loudly slamming the door as he left the apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

"I wish I had not quarrelled with him," said Lady Fitzgerald to herself when left to her own meditations, "for now he will be so sulky for several days that it will be useless to propose new plans to him for bringing the young men on whom I have views here. But he really is so unbearable, so rude, and says such personal things, that he is enough to make a saint lose her temper. He was right, however, on one point. It is no use filling the house with other girls to counteract my schemes for our own, nor to invite other men than those who would make suitable husbands, to observe, and perhaps warn, those we have designs on. Lookers-on often see the game that is playing, better than those engaged in it, and I will ask only Mr. Herbert Vernon and Hunter. I will propose our going to Deer-park to spend a week, and engage these young men to accompany us. Much may be effected in a week when young persons are thrown constantly together, and, if my daughters are not fools, they may so play their cards as not to let this opportunity pass without profiting by it."

Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald was by no means a man who bore malice long, notwithstanding that his wife accused him of being sulky. The anger of the morning generally subsided under the influence of a good dinner and a bottle of claret, and on the day in question, Lady Fitzgerald, as a peace-offering, had agreeably surprised him by the presence

of one of his most favourite dishes prepared by her orders, and which had not been entered in the bill of fare. This system of conciliation never had failed, a system which most, if not all, wives with husbands inclined to be *gourmands* would do well to adopt; and when the cover was removed from this favourite dish, and its savoury fumes tickled the olfactory nerves of the baronet, a broad smile revealed his restored good humour, and a request to his "dear Martha" to drink a glass of wine with him assured her that the personal affronts offered him some hours before were forgiven. Well has it been observed by a philosopher who knew mankind profoundly, that they are generally governed by those who have studied their weaknesses, rather than by persons well aware of their virtues; and often had Lady Fitzgerald proved the truth of the reflection in her management of her kind-hearted but somewhat impatient husband. On the present occasion, when her daughters left the dining-room, she remained with Sir Geoffrey while he drank his claret, and after an artful preamble introduced her plan of a week's sojourn at Deer-park, with so much tact that he listened to it with good humour.

"But why not invite these officers here, Martha, instead of to Deer-park? We shall have to send many things there to render the house habitable, for you know it is at present a little in the Castle Rack-rent style, and the transporting of the necessary objects will be attended with considerable expense."

"You are quite right, my dear; indeed I must do you



the justice to say you generally are; but in the present case my motive for preferring Deer-park is, that, it being well known to our neighbours that owing to the dilapidated state of the place and the paucity of furniture, we cannot receive more than two or three visitors, they cannot feel offended at not being engaged, so that the girls will have the undivided attention of Messrs. Herbert Vernon and Hunter."

"A capital plan, Martha, an excellent plan, to which I willingly assent; but do you know that it struck me when we gave our last gala, that Grace O'Neill had made a deep impression on Mr. Herbert Vernon, and that that madcap Honor O'Flaherty wholly engrossed Hunter? I move about, look here, and look there, and make my own observations, and such was the result."

"Nevertheless, my dear, I think it worth our while to try my plan. We should leave no effort untried to give our girls a chance; and men are very prone, when those they prefer are absent, to be content with those who are present."

The invitations were sent and promptly accepted by the gentlemen in question, in the full belief that the ladies of their love would be of the party, each anticipating with pleasure the opportunity thus afforded of enjoying their society. But "a change came o'er the spirit of their dream" when the following day they ascertained that neither Miss O'Neill nor Miss O'Flaherty was invited, and they heartily regretted having accepted the invitation to "Deer-park."

"There's some plot hatched by Lady Fitzgerald, I am

sure," thought Honor O'Flaherty, when Mr. Hunter informed her of the intended visit to Deer-park. "But I'll defeat it, or my name is not Honor O'Flaherty, and, perhaps, the cunning old lady may find that the plan she has formed to spoil my chance may be turned to advance it. I think it's rather unfair that she who hawks her daughters half over England every summer, can't let us, poor girls, who haven't the means to go there to show ourselves, have a chance when it is thrown in our way. Don't be too sure, my lady, that, after all, I don't defeat your schemes, for when it comes to securing a husband I won't stand on trifles, I can promise you. I'll set all my wits to work, and make my Lady Fitzgerald feel that she's no match for me when I take it into my head to carry a point. Poverty and dependence are rare sharpeners of the wit, and I have tasted both so long that I know the bitterness too well not to endeavour to escape from them. Courage, Honor, and assert your right to fight for the prize the old lady would wrest from your grasp. I'll just put on my bonnet and step to the Countess O'Neill's; perhaps I may hear of something there to help me to work out my plan."

Miss O'Flaherty found Grace in the garden, and alone. "Are you asked to Deer-park?" was the first question she addressed to her friend.

"No," was the answer, "but if I were I would have declined the invitation."

"And why?"

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"Because I prefer staying at home with my grandmother."

"But don't you think it rather strange, Grace, that neither you nor I have been invited?"

"Not in the least. Surely the Fitzgeralds, who are always so kind and hospitable to their friends, need not engage all of them on every occasion, and more especially when they go to Deer-park, where there is so little accommodation for company."

"But why go to Deer-park, where there is so little accommodation?"

"Because they prefer it, I suppose; and, probably, because they wish to encourage their tenants there, and assist the poor."

"Well, Grace, you are simple as a child. *You* never see anything but good in everything. Now, I'll lay a wager that this visit to that old ruined barrack, Deer-park, is a plan got up by Lady Fitzgerald to have Mr. Herbert Vernon and Mr. Hunter all to themselves for a week, free from our presence."

"How can you; Honor, be so suspicious, so ungrateful?"

"How can I be so much more sharp-sighted than you are, Grace? That's what you should say."

"There are times, Honor, and this is one of them, when I feel so displeased with you that I am ready to abjure our friendship. I can't bear ingratitude or suspicion."

"I should like to know what I am to be so mighty grateful to Lady Fitzgerald for?"

"If your own heart does not tell you, it would be vain to remind you."

"You are always for making molehills into mountains, Grace."

"And you, vice versa, are for making mountains into molehills."

"Because I am not ready to think that I owe eternal gratitude to the Fitzgeralds for sending my mother the surplus of their comforts, which they never miss, and which, if not sent to her, would go to some one else."

"Oh! Honor, this is rank ingratitude, and pains me more than I can express."

"What they and others have done for my mother I would be quite as ready to do for them, if I possessed the means."

"I do hope and trust you would; but, although the power be denied you of testifying this otherwise than by your gratitude, the consciousness of a warm sense of favours received justifies to one's own feelings their acceptance, and precludes the sense of humiliation."

"Well, wait, Grace, until I have secured a rich husband, and then all who have helped my mother will find that I am not ungrateful."

"Could you repay tenfold the kindness shown to your mother, you would still subject yourself to the imputation of ingratitude, unless you felt as grateful as if you had

never done so. Repaying kindness does not exonerate the payer from the debt, if the sense of it is obliterated from the mind."

"It's no good to reason with you, Grace. You and I see things in such a different point of view that it's just the same as if you looked at some object through a blue glass, that made it look blue, and I looked on it through a green glass, that made it appear green; and that we were both to insist that it was as each of us saw it."

"No, Honor, your comparison is not correct. There is but one true and fair medium of viewing moral feelings and principles; and that is by regarding objects through an unprejudiced mind, which may be likened to an unstained glass."

"Have it all your own way, Grace; you are as like your grandmother as two peas in all your thoughts and ways."

"Would I could believe this, Honor; for then I should consider that you paid me the greatest compliment I ever received."

"Now, don't let us go on preaching, Grace, there's a dear, good girl, for I'm quite as angry at Lady Fitzgerald's engaging your beau as mine, and, if I were you, I'd tell him not to go, and that would serve the old lady right."

"My beau!" repeated Miss O'Neill, a blush overspreading her face.

"Yes, your beau! You don't mean to say that Mr. Herbert Vernon is not in love with you, I hope?"

"No girl has a right to assert that a man is in love with her who has never told her so," observed Grace; "and I should be extremely sorry to be assured that Mr. Herbert Vernon felt a preference for me which I could not reciprocate."

"There, Grace, with all your wisdom you are wrong. It is always well to have as many admirers as possible, for one can play them off against each other. If Mr. Herbert Vernon would propose for you, which I think, with a little encouragement, he might be got to do, and that you refused him, for which, begging your pardon, I think you'd be a great fool to do, that might encourage Captain Sydney Mordant to propose. Oh! how you blush, Grace; and you would not refuse *him*, I suppose."

"How poor an opinion you must entertain of me," said Miss O'Neill, with an air of offended dignity, "if you think I could descend to such unworthy means to secure a husband. Captain Sydney Mordant is nothing more to me than Mr. Herbert Vernon. I have not had the slightest reason to suppose that he entertains the slightest preference for me, so —"

"Why do you blush then, Grace? Is all the preference at your side?"

"I repeat there is no preference at either side, and I request that the subject may cease."

"Ah, Grace, Grace! if you would only play your cards as I'd advise you, you'd soon be married. Let Captain Herbert Vernon propose, and then let me tell Hunter, under the seal of strict secrecy, of it, which will, of course, induce him to inform Captain Mordant of the fact. This will rouse Mordant, if he really has a liking to you, which I strongly suspect, to propose likewise, and, if he should not, you can marry Vernon."

"Not another word, Honor, unless you wish to put an end to our friendship. You have shown me that you entertain a very poor opinion of my character and conduct in supposing me capable of adopting the advice you have given."

"There are some persons whom one cannot serve, and you are one of them, Grace; and there's an end of it," replied Miss O'Flaherty, more than half disposed to be angry. "Let us go to your grandmother, for my mother will be bothering me with questions about her when I go home, and I must have my answers ready."

When the two young girls entered the drawing-room, they found the Countess O'Neill absent, and Grace, fearful that she might be unwell, sought her in her chamber, leaving Honor O'Flaherty alone. Possessed of an insatiable curiosity, this wild and wayward girl was deterred by no honourable or delicate scruples from gratifying it whenever any opportunity was afforded her, and on this occasion, seeing a letter with a broken seal on the table near the countess's easy-chair, she snatched it, and hurriedly

made herself mistress of its contents. She paused for a moment, and then, instead of restoring the letter to its place, hastily consigned it to her pocket, and, opening the window next the chair of the countess, resumed her seat at the other end of the room, and, taking up a book, pretended to be busily engaged with its contents as she heard the approaching footsteps of Grace. "It was as I supposed," said Miss O'Neill, "my grandmother has been seized by a severe headache, and has lain down."

"And I won't keep you from her," observed Honor, rising to depart; "so good bye, Grace, and mind you forget and forgive anything I may have said to displease you; for, be assured, I had only your good at heart, for no one loves you better than I do."

"Farewell, Honor. Oh! how I wish I could bring you to think as I do, and to lay aside all unworthy projects and schemes to obtain a husband. They are so unfeminine, so indelicate, that all who discover them must think less of you than you deserve, for I will not, I cannot, believe that you are the wordly-minded girl you profess to be."

"Why, sometimes I am only joking," replied Honor, with a smile, as she departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

"AND so that blockhead, Sir Henry Travers, has made his proposal for her," said Honor O'Flaherty, locking her door carefully to prevent intrusion, and drawing from her pocket the letter she had purloined at the Countess O'Neill's. "Here," resumed she, "is a girl who has never given him the least encouragement, and to whom he offers his hand, while I, who tried all my arts to bring him to the point, totally failed, which is the reason I am always hoaxing and bantering him. Who knows, if I had not enraged him, but that, finding himself refused by Grace, he might have fallen to my lot? Lady Travers! how well it would have sounded, and what a gay life I should lead if I bore it! It was foolish to wage war against him. A girl who has set her heart on being married never should make enemies. I must be more on my guard in future, for I see the evil consequences of letting out either one's anger or one's plans. I am now convinced that, had I not told the Fitzgerald girls that I should soon secure Hunter, this party to Deer-park would not have been got up; but I must be wiser in future. This same proposal shall be turned to good account;" and she again perused it. "Fortunately, the baronet writes such a long, straggling, illegible hand, that, by scratching out some words and scribbling in others I can make Hunter believe the proposal is for me, and addressed to my mother. This will, this *must*, have a

great effect on his feelings, and I'll take care to play my cards so well that he shall believe I have rejected Travers because I am in love with him. What good fun it will be, and how well I'll get through my part! But first let me make the necessary alterations in this precious letter." And, effacing some words and adding others, the letter might pass, even to a cleverer person than Mr. Hunter, as having been addressed to Mrs. O'Flaherty. To be sure the terms of profound respect in which the proposal was expressed did seem somewhat absurd as addressed to such a weak and ridiculous person as Mrs. O'Flaherty, and as referring to so wild and unreserved a young lady as her daughter, and did make Honor more than once burst into uncontrollable laughter as she perused them; but she counted on the stupidity of Mr. Hunter for not detecting this want of *vraisemblance*, and relied on her own talent for passing it off. "The countess and her granddaughter will never mention to any one that Travers has proposed. I know their starched notions on these points too well to have any fear. Grace will repel him with all due politeness, and there will be an end of the matter; but even should she accept him, which I think utterly out of the question, I can always make Hunter believe that Travers only proposed to Grace O'Neill when he found that I would not accept him. How I long to show the letter to Hunter, and to disclose to him my terror lest my mother should compel me to marry the baronet on account of his great riches! I must even get up a few tears if necessary, to

impose on my admirer, and cover my face with my handkerchief, to hide, not my blushes, but the absence of them. I wouldn't have half the satisfaction in marrying Hunter had he really taken a fancy to me and proposed in the regular way; but to have brought it around by my own cleverness, there is the triumph."

When Honor O'Flaherty met Mr. Hunter the following day by the seaside, where latterly their meetings had been very frequent, she assumed a pensive air, which was so unusual to her that her admirer inquired the cause.

"I am wretched," replied the young lady, "for that odious Sir Henry Travers has proposed for me."

"He has, has he? Well, but let me tell you, it's an offer many girls would jump at. He has a capital fortune, a fine place, and is rather a gentlemanlike sort of fellow."

"I would rather die than marry him, notwithstanding all his thousands a year and his fine place." And Honor called up a most sentimental expression of countenance.

"Is it that you like some one else?" inquired Hunter.

"How can *you* ask such a question? If I did *not* like some one else, would not this be a marriage that no girl could refuse?"

"Well, but if your affections are engaged you can refuse this Travers."

"That would be easily done; but my mother, as you may naturally imagine when you reflect on my having no fortune, is so anxious for me to accept this offer that I shall have no peace nor quiet at home until I do. Look,

here is the letter. She received it yesterday, and, when I requested that a refusal should immediately be sent to Sir Henry, she said I must be mad, yes, positively mad, to think of rejecting such a proposal, I dare not, of course, tell her that my heart is engaged."

"Why not?"

"Because the person to whom I have unfortunately given it has never told me that he had bestowed his heart on me in exchange;" and Honor applied her handkerchief to her face, whether for the purpose of concealing her blushes or wiping away a tear her admirer could not ascertain. He took her hand in his and pressed it, hesitated for a moment, and then, clearing his throat, said,

"Any fellow that had the good fortune to be liked by you would be a devilish ungrateful dog if he did not love you in return. I am a poor hand at making fine speeches; it is quite out of my line; but, by Jove! if you refuse Travers on *my* account I shall think myself bound to marry you myself."

"Oh, James, dear James, do you, indeed, love me?"

"I suppose I do," was the ungallant answer; "for I never before asked any girl to marry me, although two or three girls, ay, and very pretty ones, too, I can assure you, were dying in love with me."

"I can well believe it," and a deep sigh followed the admission, "for who, dear James, could help loving you?"

"There are some fellows in our regiment who pretend

that it is only the fortune to which people know I am heir that has made girls wish to marry me."

"And are you heir to a fortune?" inquired Honor, with a most artless countenance. "I am so sorry you are rich."

"Why so?"

"Because you have probably a father, or guardian, or some one who, for that very reason, may prevent you from marrying a girl who has no fortune; whereas, if you were poor, no one would interfere."

"You are a true-hearted girl, Honor, that you are, and I like you all the better for loving me only for myself. But don't be uneasy as to any one interfering to prevent my marrying you. I am of age, a trip to Gretna-green is easily accomplished, and, the knot once tied, then all would be safe. As to asking my old governor's consent, that would be useless; he would not hear of my marrying anything short of an earl's daughter, in order that there may be a Lady Augusta or a Lady Mary in the family; for the old boy and girl have a great fancy for titles; and as to my marrying an Irish girl, they would as soon consent to my wedding a wild Indian."

"But, if you offend them, they may refuse to forgive you — may disinherit you; and, though I don't value riches, you may, and I should be wretched to be the cause of your losing your fortune."

"Not they. They are not such fools. I have offended them fifty times; but they have always been as ready to

forgive as I was to offend, and so they will when we have made a runaway marriage. They'll make a great fuss at first — they'll swear they'll not receive you, and that they'll cut off the supplies to me — but we'll let them cool down by degrees, and then they'll find out that it's no such easy matter to break with an only son on whom they doat, and we'll be invited to Wintern Abbey, receive lots of presents and cash, and there will be an end of the matter."

"Oh! dear James, how happy we shall be!"

"That we shall, Honor. I'll buy you a couple of such nags, and take you out hunting with me. I'll have a coach, and drive four-in-hand; and you'll sit on the box with me, and we'll go to all the races. But mind, Honor, there's one condition which I must make, and without which I would not marry any woman on earth, and that is, you must not interfere with my smoking. Without my cigars I should be like a fish out of water, and I should soon hate any woman who objected to them."

"You little know me, dear James, if you suppose that I could object to anything that gave you pleasure. But, in the present case, it happens that I have a peculiar liking to the smell of tobacco; so much so that I have often longed to smoke a cigar myself."

"Then, by Jove! you shall; and it will look devilish knowing to see you in a riding-habit, with your hat a little on one side and a cigar in the corner of your mouth; which will show off your red lips to advantage."

"Oh! delightful! What rare fun we shall have! Won't we quiz your brother officers, and laugh at them! We'll be two against one: whatever you say I'll swear to; and you'll do the same by me, won't you?"

"You may swear to it. But mind, Honor, don't let the least hint slip that we intend to marry. The colonel, if he suspected it, would write to my governor, and I should be sent to England on leave of absence. No; we'll keep all snug and quiet until my next quarter's allowance falls due, and when I touch the money I'll get a month's leave, and we'll make a start for Gretna-green. Another thing, too, Honor; mind you don't lose that proposal of Sir Henry Travers, for it will be well to show it to the governor and the old girl when we go to Wintern Abbey, that they may see what an offer you refused for me. A baronet with ten thousand a year, and I'll persuade them he has twenty, will show them what you might have done in your own country, and make them think more of their daughter-in-law."

"I'll keep the letter safe enough, and send an answer to it before the day is over. How the poor baronet will fret and fume when he gets my refusal! Poor man, I could almost find it in my heart to pity him!"

"How oddly things turn out, to be sure! Would you believe it, Honor, that when we met at those balls at the Fitzgeralds' I fancied that Sir Henry Travers disliked you instead of loving you."

"Because I did all in my power to discourage his addresses, and that used to enrage him."

"But what's more odd, Honor, when first I knew you I never thought I should fall in love with you myself, and would have betted ten to one against it; and even now I hardly know how it came about."

"But I do, fool," thought Honor. "Your vanity and folly rendered you an easy prey; and, knowing that it was not affection that prompted you to choose me, I never can have any regard to your feelings, once the knot is fastened."

While this thought passed through the mind of the unprincipled and reckless girl a fond smile and a pressure of Hunter's hand drew from him an avowal that, now all was settled between them, he would not give her up for the handsomest and richest girl in England, were she even a duke's daughter, "although," as he confessed, "he had always wished to marry some tiptop girl of fashion."

"You might have married any girl you took a fancy to, my dear James," said Honor, with a sentimental air; "for where, I should like to know, could the highest girl in the land meet with so fine a young man as you are?"

"Why, I believe I am not a sort of fellow to be refused, to tell you the truth; and one thing I can swear, which is, that I never asked any girl the broad staring question of 'Will you marry me?' until I proposed to you, Honor; and, what's more, hang me! if some time ago an angel had told me that I should marry you, I should have laughed outright at the bare notion; yet here I am fairly caught, and ready

to take you for better for worse, as the saying is, the moment we can get off. As I said before, I often wonder how it all came about, and I'll tell you how I account for it. Whenever I fancied, formerly, that I was smitten with a girl, I used to think of her, and even go so far as to be unhappy. I hated being put out of sorts about her sometimes, and ever since I have known you I always leave you in better humour with myself. You talk to me about *me* much more than about *you*. You say pleasant things to me — tell me that I am good looking and clever, which none of the other girls I flirted with ever did, for they were thinking more of themselves than of me — and you ridicule and quiz all the fellows in my regiment, who have such a high opinion of themselves, yet seem to hold me cheap, — that I said to myself, 'Honor is the girl for me. To be sure, she is not so refined and elegant in her manner as some of my old flames in England, but as she pleases me better, and puts me in better humour with myself, that's the point.'"

Honor O'Flaherty, reckless and coarse-minded as she was, felt the full force of the *naïve* admissions of the weak, vain, and selfish Hunter. "Oh, won't I pay you for all this?" thought she to herself, while the flush of anger mounted to her brow. "So the fool, not content with preferring me only because I flatter him, must make me feel this humiliating fact every time we meet. It is the flattery, and not the flatterer, he likes; and it is to ensure this gratification that he intends to marry me. But he shall find himself disappointed, I can promise him, for Mrs. James Hunter will

scorn to flatter her husband, however she might have condescended to administer to the vanity of her foolish lover. He has let out some disagreeable truths to me *before* wedlock, and I will let out fifty times more to him after."

"I am thinking that it is no use, and I am sure it will be no pleasure to me, to go to Deer-park to the Fitzgeralds," observed Hunter. "I should be like a fish out of water there, Honor, without you. The Fitzgerald girls never say an agreeable thing to one. They seem to be always thinking of themselves, while I only like persons who think of me."

"I must take care and not let him fall in the way of any girl who will flatter him more than I do," thought Honor, "for I do believe that if a Gorgon were to lay the honey on thicker he would prefer her to me."

"What say you, Honor, shall I go or not?"

"I shall be sorry to lose you for a week, dear James," and the lady sighed, "but if you wish to go I prefer your pleasure to my own."

"Then by Jove! I won't go a step, and I'll write an excuse at once."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHILE Herbert Vernon was becoming more enamoured at every interview with Miss O'Neill, she began to feel a stronger sentiment than indifference rising in her breast towards him, as she observed that the coldness of her reception did not prevent the perseverance of his attentions to her

She had conceived, whether justly or unjustly, a notion that his frequent visits prevented those of Captain Sydney Mordant; and this notion led her to dislike Mr. Vernon, to whom, otherwise, she would have experienced no livelier feeling than perfect indifference. There is one striking difference between the nature of men and women. A man has often been known, as in the case of Hunter, not only to vanquish a conceived dislike to a woman because he has been led to think she preferred him, but to feel, or fancy he feels, a preference for her; while a woman has seldom, if ever, been won to like a man whose attentions her avoidance of him had not the power to check. Do not think, dear male readers, that this difference originates in any peculiar good qualities of your sex such as gratitude or good nature. No; it springs solely from gratified vanity, that cannot resist the food it loves to feed on. Women, if handsome, being accustomed to flattery from their childhood, become satiated with it, unless he who administers it suits their tastes. Hence they have no gratitude for a preference they value not; while men, in the superabundance of their vanity, often yield up their freedom, if not their affections, to the woman who will minister to it, however unsuited in mind or person she may be to their tastes.

Whenever Mr. Herbert Vernon's name was announced in the drawing-room of the Countess O'Neill that lady observed an expression of dissatisfaction overspread the countenance of her granddaughter, and, although too well bred to suffer any visible indications of her growing dislike to

become apparent to him who excited it, her involuntary absence of mind when he addressed her, and her monosyllabic replies, might have taught a more sensitive or more experienced suitor that he had wholly failed to make a favourable impression on the heart he so ardently desired to win. No roseate blush of pleasure, no dimpled smile, no unconscious start, those certain indications of a growing preference, betrayed that the presence of her admirer was welcome to Grace O'Neill. Nevertheless Mr. Herbert Vernon's passion was quite strong enough to live on without the food of encouragement required by other men to bring a passion to maturity, and, with the blindness peculiar to lovers, he believed that, once his affection should be declared to its object, she might be induced to treat him with less coldness. Every time they met this declaration hovered on his lips, but how make it to one who remained so near the chair of her grandmother that not a syllable could be addressed to her without its being audible to that lady; and a declaration, as all lovers know, or ought to know, never has a good effect if more than *two ears* can hear it. Various and, as he thought, clever hints, plain even to the least quick intellects, used he to direct on the subject of love and conjugal happiness to Grace, descriptive of the sort of person who alone could tempt him to seek the altar of the saffron-robed binder of hands, descriptions so entirely applicable to her that no one save a person obstinately determined not to understand them could mistake their meaning. But, when Mr. Herbert Vernon turned his eyes to the beauti-

ful face he hoped to find suffused by a blush of consciousness of what was passing in his heart, he became chilled by the unconcerned and indifferent countenance of the lady, and the words he would fain utter died on his tongue.

While he continued from day to day to pursue his unpromising suit Captain Sydney Mordant waited impatiently to hear its result. Often would he say to himself, "What can it be to me? Will her refusal of poor Herbert place me in a different position? Can I, with my scanty portion as a *cadet de famille*, offer any fair prospect of a provision for a wife and family? Never before did I regret my poverty. But now, when it raises a barrier between me and the only woman I ever wished to call mine, I feel, ay, bitterly feel it, and lament for the first time the chance that sent my brother into the world a year before me. Happy Vernon, who can pass whole hours in her society, who is enabled by his position to sue for the hand I would give worlds to call mine! Yet, if he should sue in vain, if she should reject the brilliant fortune he can lay at her feet, will he not, with all his riches, be as unhappy as I am who have none? I knew not when I promised to leave the field open to him who could, in wedding her, bestow rank, and fortune too, how much pain the sacrifice would cost me. Never do I see him direct his steps to the Countess O'Neill's door without a jealous pang shooting through my heart. I examine his countenance, when he returns, with inexpressible anxiety, in order to read in it what progress he has made in his suit. If he looks cheerful, a sentiment approaching to

hatred fills my mind, for I am tortured by the supposition that he has had cause to hope; and it is only when I notice that he is gloomy and depressed that my old friendship for him revives; because I attribute his *tristesse* to his want of success with the beautiful Grace. What must she think of my avoidance of her? Does she regret not seeing me? But fool, vain fool that I am, it is but too probable that, while this constrained absence inflicts misery on me, she has never observed it. And yet have I not seen her lovely face brighten up when I approached her? Have I not seen a rosy blush bespread it when I've entered the room, and beheld her matchless eyes sparkle, and then veil themselves beneath their transparent lids, as if they dreaded to betray their increased lustre to me? Have I not had as much experience of women as most men of my age, ay, and of some of the most spotless of the sex, too? and could I be deceived into the belief that I was not totally indifferent to her, which I have dared to indulge? No, if I know myself, I am *not* a vain man, nor one who could conjure up such a fancy without a base to build it on. If looks and blushes may ever be trusted, and surely they are the most artless of all indications, then may I believe that my presence created a livelier interest in the breast of the lovely Grace O'Neill than that of any other man! Herbert Vernon grows less communicative, less confidential, every day. Is this the result of *increasing* or *decreasing* hope to gain his suit? Perhaps, knowing my deep admiration for Grace, he wishes to spare my feelings by not telling me his success. But what

if his silence on the subject should originate in the objection all men, even the least vain of us all, feel in confessing that they have failed to please the object of their passion? Yes, it may be so. I will cheat myself into this hope, and then, my poor friend Vernon, I will, indeed, pity instead of envying you."

When, a few minutes after this soliloquy, Mordant encountered Vernon returning from his visit to the Countess O'Neill's, the reverie in which he seemed plunged, and the gravity of his countenance, betokened none of the happiness peculiar to a favoured suitor. Vernon would have passed on without recognising his friend, so deep was his abstraction, had not Mordant exclaimed, "How now, Vernon! are you going to cut me?"

The latter started, as if awakening from a dream, and, holding out his hand, said, "I really did not see you; my thoughts were so deeply engaged elsewhere."

"I hope on an agreeable subject?"

"Would I could say yes! but, alas! my dear fellow, the contrary is the fact. But let us adjourn to your room or mine; the street is a bad place to converse in, on what so powerfully excites my feelings. You have acted so honourably to me, my dear Mordant, that I ought to have no concealment with you. Indeed I think myself blameable in not having sooner reported progress to you, though, on second thoughts, I have used the wrong word; for I have made no progress at all with Miss O'Neill, who, I verily

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believe, feels rather *more* than *less* indifferent towards me than when first I knew her."

Mordant felt a glow of pleasure diffused through his breast as he listened to this avowal, although the next moment he blamed himself for his selfishness. Having entered Herbert Vernon's room, the latter threw himself on a sofa, looking so mortified that even Mordant felt pity for him.

"All my assiduities, and all the love in which they originated, have failed to touch her heart," said Herbert Vernon. "She does not, or, rather, I believe, she *will* not, understand the passion she has inspired. I have gone on, hoping from day to day to observe some slight indication of pleasure at my approach, or regret for my absence; but I have watched for such in vain, and I have at length come to the conclusion that I have not the most remote chance of ever making any impression on her heart. Under these circumstances, I feel that I ought to discontinue my attentions; and yet I have not courage to banish myself from her presence, or to tear her from the heart she tortures. I am now determined to know the worst. I will declare my affection, and ask if I may dare to hope for its being sanctioned. Should she, as my fears suggest, decline my hand, I will apply for leave of absence, and go home; for I can no longer support the state of anxiety I have lately been enduring. Until she has positively refused me I cannot entirely banish hope, and suspense is

no longer bearable. You say nothing, Mordant — you offer no advice.”

“What can I advise, my dear Vernon? I believe that, in your case, I should adopt the plan you propose; but the truth is, my own feelings are too much interested to render me competent to offer advice. Yes, Vernon, I love Miss O'Neill — passionately love her; and neither prudence nor avoidance of her has as yet enabled me to triumph over my passion.”

“Perhaps, Mordant, her total indifference to me may be caused by her preference to you?”

How Mordant's heart throbbed at the suggestion.

“No, no, Vernon, I dare not flatter myself on this point. Nay, more; I should regret, rather than rejoice, were your notion founded on truth. It would be weak, unmanly, and selfish to wish to create an interest in a heart I cannot, dare not, claim; and, however I might bear to struggle against my own unhappiness, I could not contemplate even the possibility of hers; if, indeed, she entertained a preference for me. I am too poor to offer her a home suitable to her merit and my own birth. I have no prospects to look forward to but promotion in my profession. With that and the scanty pittance of a younger brother I must be content; but sorry should I be to involve her I love in the perpetual difficulties entailed by straitened circumstances.”

“But if you knew she loved you, Mordant, would you

still have courage to resist suing for the hand which you believed she was ready to accord to you?"

"Yes, Vernon; if I know myself I think I should, for I could not bear to see her deprived of comforts to which she has ever been accustomed, and which my income could not furnish."

"One question more, Mordant. If you knew that she was pining for your love — that her happiness, her life, was at stake — could you still persist in avoiding her?"

"Why, Vernon, present such an hypothesis to me? Why vainly, uselessly, excite my feelings?"

"Because I strongly suspect, Mordant, that the case I have put to you is not wholly an hypothetical one. Yes, I believe that Grace O'Neill entertains for you that preference which I would give half my future fortune to inspire; and I am not so wholly selfish as not to wish to secure her happiness, although, alas! I cannot form it. Her absence of mind — her frequent relapses into *tristesse* when she thought herself unobserved — and which I, like a fool, fancied, in the commencement of my acquaintance with her, might have their origin in a growing preference to myself — have, I am now quite certain, proceeded from an attachment to you. I remember the pleasure she took in your society — how her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks became pink as a new-blown rose, when you approached her. I recollect no such symptoms when any one else addressed her; and, consequently, it appears to me that you, whether willingly or otherwise, have won her affection. If her peace

should be endangered, Mordant, you could not allow prudence to hinder you from avowing your passion. Every other consideration should yield to that. And now, to prove to you that I do not wholly disregard prudence, let me tell you my project. I will one day, as you know, be rich. All my father's property is entailed on me, but with me the entail ends, and I may bequeath the fortune, or any portion of it, to whom I like. My father has been too generous, too kind, to me to admit of my desiring to succeed him in the possession of the property, of which he makes so good a use, and I say with all sincerity of heart that I trust it will be many long years before such an event may arrive. He gives me a much larger allowance than I spend, and, were I to require it to-morrow, would make me any advance I asked for. Let me, therefore, my dear Mordant, raise twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds, the interest for which I can pay out of my yearly allowance without being put to the slightest inconvenience; and this twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds will enable you to make a settlement to its full amount on your future wife, while the interest of the capital will make a comfortable addition to your income."

"My good, my generous friend," exclaimed Mordant, greatly touched by Vernon's offer, "how shall I express my deep sense of your friendship, so nobly proved by your unexampled generosity?"

"Make no attempt to thank me, but do better, my dear fellow. Accept my offer without hesitation. You have not,

I trust, waited until now to be convinced of the sincerity of my friendship for you, or to know how readily I would devote some of the wealth which will be mine to ensure your comfort. But, when to this old and warm friendship is added the desire to secure the happiness of the only woman I ever loved, judge how eager I am that you should not refuse to accept from me the means of assuring it."

"But, my dear Vernon, I cannot."

"Don't say *cannot*, say *will not*," interrupted Vernon impatiently. "Are you too proud to owe happiness to a friend, or to risk that of a woman who loves you, sooner than vanquish a pride so ill-placed? Could we but change places, do you think I would refuse at your hands the offer I now make? No, on my honour, on my soul, I would not; and my happiness would be enhanced by the reflection that it was due to a friend."

"Do not think me unfeeling, ungrateful, dear Vernon; but this new proof of your unselfishness, your worth, makes me believe you more worthy of Miss O'Neill than I am. If she could know your offer, it would, it must, change the current of her sentiments, and make her comprehend the value of the heart ready to be proffered for her acceptance."

"No, Mordant, she must never know it. I, too, can be proud, and I would not owe even the inestimable blessing of her hand to mere esteem called forth by an act the generosity which you greatly exaggerate, but which I am

perfectly convinced *you* would not hesitate to emulate were it in your power."

"See her again, my dear friend, plead your suit, and demand her hand. If she rejects you, you will, by the manner in which it is done, be able to judge whether her refusal proceeds from a preference to another, or simply because you have not yet interested her affections. If the former be the cause, and that I should be really the object on which she has placed them, let time be given to see whether the growing tenderness may not subside when no indication of reciprocity encourages its duration; and who knows but, when time to become acquainted with and appreciate your merits be afforded her, that she may not yield you the boon you sigh for?"

"Only promise me one thing, Mordant, and that is, if I find Miss O'Neill's happiness disturbed, or her health fading, that you will accept the proposition I have made, and claim the hand I must not hope to possess."

"Let us wait the result of your proposal to her before I pledge myself," said Mordant, wringing the hand his friend; and they parted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"How strange, my dear Sir Geoffrey," said Lady Fitzgerald, as she laid down on the table two notes she had been reading.

"What is strange, my dear?" inquired the old baronet.

"Refusals from Mr. Vernon and Mr. Hunter: 'Very sorry they cannot have the honour of waiting on us at Deer-park.' There must be some cause for this refusal, Sir Geoffrey. Some manœuvre or other that I don't quite comprehend."

"I should set it down to nothing more or less than a want of inclination to join for a whole week a dull family party, my dear."

"That is so like you, Sir Geoffrey, always finding the simplest reasons for actions that are perfectly incomprehensible to others."

"Probably because others search hidden motives when only the simplest exist. The gentlemen you invited have discovered that none of their acquaintances are asked, and, concluding that we shall be *en famille*, do not feel disposed to come. What can be more natural?"

"Or less flattering to us," was the brief reply; the lady who uttered it growing red in the face, always, with her, a symptom of a coming storm. "Who could have supposed that in so dull a place as —, where so little civilized society can be had, that these men would refuse our invitation? They professed to be fond of shooting too, yet, though I mentioned you could offer them some tolerable sport, they reject it. Yes, there must be some cause, and I'll not rest until I have discovered it."

"I think I could furnish the clue to the enigma," ob-

served Sir Geoffrey coolly; "they have heard that the covers at Deer-park have been so ill preserved that magpies abound there in the proportion of ten to one partridge; that the keeper talks of *the* hare instead of hares; in short, that the prospect of even one day's tolerable shooting could not be realized; and this, to men accustomed to the *battus* in England, was not encouraging."

"But our girls and a good cook, and good wine, Sir Geoffrey?"

"All these combined temptations, my dear, they have resisted; and if my advice be followed, it should be that no more attempts be made at match-making. The wildest birds on my estate are not so shy as the young men of our time, or more wary of any snare laid to catch them."

"Then how are matches to be made, I should like to know?"

"If we may believe some people, they are made in heaven; but from this opinion I confess" (and Sir Geoffrey heaved a sigh) "I am strongly disposed to dissent. I incline to the belief that chance and, above all, beauty have a great deal to do in the matter. A man sees a pretty girl, takes a fancy to her, hears other men chatter about her good looks, which last point has a great effect in exciting his passion; while the girl, pleased at his evident admiration, gives him just enough encouragement as serves to increase it, and the friends and relations, if wise, show no anxiety to bring things to a close. When the young fellow was worked himself into the notion that he can't

do without the girl, he proposes, and the marriage takes place."

"Then you would have parents and, especially, mothers take no part in getting their daughters married?"

"Decidedly."

"But can you deny, Sir Geoffrey, how successfully Lady Moreland, Lady Bellaston, and many others whom I could name, have been in getting rid of their daughters?"

"I know their daughters have married early and well, but whether this was effected by their mammās or not I do not know. A woman must be nothing short of a magician, not to say sorceress, who can persuade a fellow with half an ounce of brains in his head, or of heart in his breast, to marry a girl who did not please his fancy. I don't say that, when a man has been struck by a pretty girl, a clever mother may not help on the affair by affording opportunities of meeting, and, above all, by appearing never to suspect that anything serious is going on or desired; but, as the cookery-book phrase has it, to make hare-soup, 'first catch your hare,' so, to make a husband, first catch a lover."

"I am to suppose, then, that I do not possess the cleverness of other mothers who have succeeded in marrying off their daughters?" said Lady Fitzgerald, with an angry brow.

"We may naturally come to this conclusion, my dear, when your efforts during so many years have been so perfectly unavailing."

"They might have been otherwise, Sir Geoffrey, had you aided me," and the lady glanced angrily at her husband.

"Me aid you to kidnap poor devils! No, no, you 'll never catch me at that work, Lady Fitzgerald; I 'll never act as a decoy-duck to lure others into a scrape. If a fellow likes to marry a plain girl without a fortune, that 's his affair, and I 'll not discourage him; nay, more, I 'll give him as much venison and claret as he can swallow; but there I take my stand, and nothing shall induce me to go beyond it."

"Who ever dreamt of asking you to interfere more than most other reasonable fathers do? What I meant by your aiding me was, to take a well-stocked manor in Norfolk, invite down to it some six or eight single men with good fortunes, keep an excellent cook, and have the best wine, and so give the girls a chance."

"And give myself something more than a chance — a positive certainty, Lady Fitzgerald — of becoming — a beggar. See into what straits I have already reduced myself. Am I not over head and ears in debt, owing to having adopted your advice in taking you and the girls to London for the last six seasons? I was quite sure nothing except debt and difficulties would come of it, but you positively bored me into it."

"As a member of Parliament you were obliged to be in London, Sir Geoffrey, and the expense of two establishments was saved by our going."

"Stuff and nonsense. A single man in London can get

a cheap lodging, live at his club for a mere trifle, and dine out when he is asked. I could manage the whole thing for seven pounds a week; but when a house for a family in a fashionable street is to be taken, servants engaged, carriages and horses to be had, dinners to be given, and, above all, Lady Fitzgerald, milliners, mantuamakers, florists, shoemakers, and hairdressers to be constantly employed, what a frightful sum does it require to defray all this unavailing expenditure! Money has to be borrowed, interest to be paid for it, and season after season adds to the difficulties of a poor devil of a father, who finds himself a ruined man without having achieved the object for which all this expense was incurred."

"Nevertheless I still think, Sir Geoffrey, that had you taken the manor —"

"Taken leave of my senses," replied the baronet, greatly excited. "I should have merited to be shut up in a mad-house, and would certainly, if not protected by the privilege of Parliament, be shut up in a prison. You seem to think that the whole purpose for which a man was sent into the world was to marry off his daughters, and that his own ruin is to be risked if not accomplished in the attempt. But henceforth, Lady Fitzgerald, you shall not find me so easily managed as hitherto. If my daughters are ever to find husbands it must be in Ireland, where a long line of ancient ancestors is still a title to respect."

So saying, Sir Geoffrey angrily left the room, leaving
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his weaker, if not his better half, considerably discomposed by the result of the matrimonial consultation.

"I have not seen him so angry for some time," soliloquized the irate matron. "He 's always talking of being ruined. Every season the same story; yet still, somehow or other, we get on, as all the other people who are said to be ruined do. I never had any head for politics or accounts. Every attempt at endeavouring to comprehend either never fails to give me a headache; consequently I can't ascertain the truth of Sir Geoffrey's alarming statements, being as incompetent to look into his debts as to calculate the extent of the national one. I believe all men, except bill-brokers and speculating merchants, tell their wives they are ruined, or on the verge of being so; and the exceptions only refrain from terrifying their wives from the fear that *they*, in the frankness and candour peculiar to women, might extend the information to parties equally interested in it. Heigh-ho! I'm sure I wish that I was exempted from hearing on all occasions those frightful statements which Sir Geoffrey delights in making; for, as I can do nothing to extricate him, it's of no use making me nervous and uncomfortable. I must, however, order some of his favourite dishes, in order to restore him to good humour. How lucky it is that I have discovered that the surest and shortest road to this desired end is through his stomach!"

The cook having been summoned, and having received Lady Fitzgerald's instructions for the peace-offering to be prepared for her husband, her ladyship sought the morning-

room, where her daughters generally passed a portion of the day. She laid the letters from Messrs. Vernon and Hunter on the table for their perusal, and marked, while they alternately read them, the increased colour in their cheeks and the angry expression of their countenances.

"I am sure," observed Miss Fitzgerald, "that these foolish young men have already embarked in some absurd love affair or other, which prevents their accepting the invitation to Deer-park;" and she contemptuously threw the letter down.

"It proves that there was some truth in what Honor O'Flaherty boasted," said Miss Florence.

"That only regarded Mr. Hunter," remarked Lady Fitzgerald, "and does not account for Mr. Herbert Vernon's sending an excuse. Sophie told me this morning, when I was dressing, that Miss Magrath had informed her that Mr. Herbert is a frequent visitor at the Countess O'Neill's."

"Grace is, of course, the magnet that attracts him there? I suspected that she was setting her cap at him," said Miss Fitzgerald.

"How can you accuse her of such a thing, Florence? Grace is the last girl in the world to set her cap at any one."

"And why so, pray? Is she so mighty superior to all other girls as to disdain making an effort to win a suitor?"

"I really think so."

"Then I differ in opinion with you, Kate, and should not wonder if, after all, she carries off this prize."

"But she may accomplish this without any effort on her part. She is handsome and engaging enough to attract, and amiable enough to retain, any man who had a disengaged heart."

"You, I know, consider her a *rare avis*, a piece of perfection, near which no other girl has a chance of being admired."

"For Heaven's sake, girls, don't get into an argument. If, as Sophie told Kate, Mr. Herbert Vernon is such a frequent visitor to the Countess O'Neill's, it's of no use thinking any more about him."

"I don't see that," observed Miss Fitzgerald; "and, if I thought it worth my while to lay myself out to please Mr. Herbert Vernon, I should have little doubt of succeeding."

"I would not advise you to make the attempt, Florence."

"I don't require your advice."

"How silly it is to get up a discussion about trifles," said Lady Fitzgerald. "I have just had a very disagreeable interview with your father, who has explained to me the utter impossibility of our going to England any more, such is the deplorable state of his finances."

"But so he has told you, Mamma, regularly every year, and you have as regularly repeated the information to us, and yet we have gone to London a few months after. Papa

has cried 'wolf' so often that, like the boy in the fable, when the wolf really did come, no one believed his cry."

"This time, however, Florence, I believe there is but too much truth in your father's assertions; for, although I do not pretend to know much of business, the difficulty of getting money to pay our bills, and the frequent depression of spirits which I notice in your poor father, convince me that he does not exaggerate the embarrassed state of his affairs."

"Then why did he allow them to get embarrassed? Why did he not regularly pay all bills?"

"These are the very questions I wished to ask him, but he looked so cross that I had not the courage."

"Depend on it my poor father would have discharged his bills if he had had the money. Poor dear father! how a generous, kind spirit like his must writhe under the pressure of debt!" And Miss Fitzgerald sighed deeply as she uttered the words.

"I am quite as much to be pitied as he is, my dear," said Lady Fitzgerald. "You have no idea how annoyed I was when I was tormented by Madame Falbala, before I left London, for the amount of her bill; ay, and by half a dozen other duns who kept waiting for a settlement of their small accounts, as they term it. I never saw a vulgar-looking letter with a cipher on its seal without a shudder; and the sight of a column of arithmetical figures madame feel quite faint."

"You were more sensitive on these points than I should have been," observed Miss Kate. "All persons of fashion are dunned, you may be quite sure, and after a little use one becomes quite accustomed to it. Besides, Mamma, you, as a married woman, could not be arrested; and papa, as an M. P., was equally exempt from the penalties annexed to debt. With this conviction in your mind you should not have allowed yourself to be made uneasy."

"I assure you, Kate, light as you make of it, the being compelled to ask one's husband for money, to see the elongation of face that takes place when one has stated one's wants, and to hear the long homily that is sure to follow, is not among the lightest of a woman's trials."

"I can quite comprehend it, mother, and blame myself for having been the cause of subjecting you to this annoyance more than I ought. I might have done with fewer dresses, fewer bonnets and flowers, and should have done so, dear mother, if I had remembered, as I ought, the annoyance my extravagance would entail on you." And Miss Fitzgerald arose from her seat and embraced her mother affectionately.

"You must not accuse yourself, dear Florence; I never found you extravagant."

"I should think not, for I am sure I have seen Florence wear dresses, flowers, satin shoes, and gloves that could no longer be termed fresh," observed Miss Kate.

"Florence is a much better manager than you are, Kate, I must say."

"Which means that she has not such a decided objection to faded finery as I have."

"As it now appears settled that we are not to go to England the ensuing season, it seems to me that you should both, my dear girls, turn your thoughts towards marrying in your native land."

"*Quelle horreur, quelle horreur!* Only fancy poor me married to one of the Irish squires in our neighbourhood! — a man I should be ashamed to present to any of my fashionable friends in London."

"But, if the London men won't seek your hands, you must make up your minds to bestow them on your own countrymen."

"Don't you think, dear mother, that it will be time enough to think of them when they pay any attention to us, which, hitherto, they have not seemed disposed to do."

"Because you treated them rather *de haut en bas*."

"I certainly shall lay no snares to catch any of those wild birds," said Miss Kate.

"And I," observed the elder sister, "will make no rash vows to refuse a countryman until I am put to the test."

"Wisely determined, dear Florence, and may you soon have an opportunity of saying yes."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ensuing day after the confidential conversation with Mordant, Herbert Vernon, unable any longer to bear the suspense he had lately sustained, addressed a letter to the Countess O'Neill, entreating her to sanction his addresses to her granddaughter. He enclosed an open billet to that young lady containing an offer of his heart and hand, and impatiently awaited an answer. When the letter, the most momentous he had ever written, was despatched, and beyond the power of recall, he almost wondered at his own temerity in sending it. The more he reflected on the uniform coldness with which his attentions had been received by Miss O'Neill, the less hope remained to him of their being now more favourably accepted; and, as he walked up and down his chamber in a state of agitation never previously experienced, he felt that, little as he had dared to hope, the total demolition of these faint hopes required the exertion of all his strength of mind to support. "I have been rash in thus bringing the affair to a crisis," thought Vernon. "Time and patience might have wrought something in my favour. Yet no; what grounds had I for hope, and is it not better to know the worst at once? Had I courage it would have been well to have made my proposal in person. I should then have had an opportunity of judging whether I was rejected from indifference, or because another and more fortunate man had made an

impression on her heart. But I will, even though rejected, ask permission to be received as an acquaintance, as a friend; and opportunities may thus offer of ascertaining the state of her feelings. Yes, beautiful Grace, though I have not been able to win your affection, I will try, at least, to merit your esteem; and, if *I* cannot render you happy myself, it will be some consolation to enable another to do so."

In due time the servant who was the bearer of Vernon's letter returned. How quickly throbbed the heart of his master as he heard his step ascending the stairs and saw him enter the room. It was a relief to him to hear that "an answer would be sent;" it seemed a reprieve for which he was thankful. Vernon could settle to nothing from the moment he received this message. Various conflicting thoughts passed through his mind. Hope revived in his breast once more as the thought suggested itself that, had Miss O'Neill positively decided on rejecting him, no time would have been lost in sending an answer to his letter. He walked up and down his room; opened his window to see if any one was bringing a letter to the barracks; took up a newspaper and tried to read, but in a few minutes threw it down again; opened book after book, in the hope of being able to occupy himself, but every attempt was vain. Never did time hang so heavily on his hands, and, when every half hour he referred to his watch, he could scarcely believe that four hours had not elapsed when only one had gone by. At length a letter was brought to him,

and he desired his servant to leave it on the table, being unwilling that he should see his emotion. When the servant had left the room Vernon, with trembling hands, tore open the envelope and found that it contained only one letter. That was from the Countess O'Neill, who stated that her granddaughter had requested her to answer the letter addressed to her by Mr. Vernon. In terms the most courteous the proposal was declined, though with a due sense of the honour conferred on Miss O'Neill, and with every kind wish for the future happiness of Mr. Vernon, whom the countess stated it would always give them pleasure to receive as a friend, but with an explicit understanding that the proposal which he had done Miss O'Neill the honour to make should be no more referred to.

"Cold, unfeeling girl, not to have written me a single line!" exclaimed Vernon, as he threw the letter from him. "A love like mine merited at least a few expressions of kindness from her own hand. But perhaps it is better as it is. A note from her would be something to treasure, something to keep alive a hopeless passion, and I need, Heaven knows, nought to do that. Grace, Grace, you have cast from you a heart that loved, idolized you, and with a passion so true, so unselfish that even now, when hope is fled for ever, it can dictate the prayer springing from its inmost core that you may never have cause to repent this rejection, — that in him you love you may find all the devotion for you that fills mine!"

A sentiment of delicacy prevented Mordant seeking his

friend that day. He wished to spare his feelings by not witnessing the emotions of regret which a refusal of his suit would inflict on Vernon; and he had not philosophy enough to behold unmoved the happiness which its acceptance must bestow. "Herbert Vernon," thought he, "is not a man likely to be denied the hand of any girl; so good-looking, gentlemanlike, and high-principled as he is. I know no man more likely to render a woman happy. In England he might, I am sure, select, with a certainty of success, any girl from the proudest house to become his bride. With a mind and person so attractive, with a character so respected and esteemed, and with prospects so brilliant, how few could reject him! Miss O'Neill may have hitherto given no attention to his assiduities, because she did not believe that he was seriously attached to her, but, his devotion proved by the most irrefragable of all proofs — an offer of marriage — she may now accept his hand." A pang shot through his heart as he contemplated this possibility, and, after yielding for a few minutes to the pain he endured, he endeavoured to reason himself out of his regret. "I must not be selfish," thought he. "With the conviction that nowhere could this matchless creature bestow her hand where the blessing would be more highly prized than by Vernon, nor where her happiness could be more safely trusted, I must not allow my own disappointment to engross my thoughts. Situated as I unfortunately am, I could not ask her to share my lot, and, as she could not be mine, I ought to rejoice that the

man I most esteem will call her his. Happy Vernon! you will, indeed, possess a treasure, but you are worthy of her. Even my tortured heart, while writhing under the pangs of hopeless love, is ready to acknowledge that you are so. Perhaps, had I not discontinued my attentions, I might have created an interest in her heart. There were moments during our first acquaintance that I thought I was not *wholly* indifferent to her. Oh! those were delicious, intoxicating moments — never, never to be forgotten! Had I loved her less — if *her* happiness had not been far dearer to me than my own — I could not have had the courage to avoid her presence, and desist from betraying to her the passion she had inspired. Beautiful Grace! you will never know how wildly, how devotedly, you were loved! If you ever bestow a thought on me, you will think me strange, wayward, and incomprehensible. But better is it that you should thus judge me than know hereafter that I was selfish enough to involve you in the misery of poverty, which must have been the case had I won your hand."

While these reflections were passing through the mind of Mordant his cogitations were disturbed by a visit, as unexpected as it was undesired, from Mr. Hunter. One of the evils of residing in a barrack is, that solitude, unless he who wishes for it is made of sterner stuff than was Mordant, is almost out of the question. Hence it often occurs that, when an officer wishes most to be alone, one of his comrades will lounge into his room, to bestow his tediousness on him, and will frequently be

so indiscreet as not to perceive that his presence is unwelcome.

"You look as bored as I am, Mordant," observed Hunter, throwing himself on a sofa. "But I don't wonder at it; this is such a devilish dull place that one never knows how to kill time."

"Have you made many attempts?"

"Innumerable. I have set all the idle boys about the streets boxing; and was rather amused by it at first, but I have got tired of it. I have set them to run races in the exercise-ground until they have been ready to drop, and sent them home happy in the possession of more coppers than they ever possessed before. Five shillings' worth of halfpence goes a great way in distributing rewards among these half-naked urchins, who consider me nothing less than a Cræsus in wealth and a prince in generosity because I have expended some two or three pounds' worth of halfpence in encouraging their gymnastic sports."

"That accounts for the crowd of ragged boys, with elfin locks, that I saw yesterday coming out of the whisky-shop intoxicated — or, as one of them termed it, 'screeching drunk,' — vociferating blessings on 'the crathur,' and 'the soldier-officer' who furnished the means of procuring it. You will do mischief, Hunter, in enabling those poor boys to get drunk."

"But they are such good fun when the whisky works in them. See them before they have drank any, and they are inanimate, timid, and pale, looking the pictures of

starvation and misery; but no sooner have they tossed off a glass of this fiery liquid than they become wild, reckless, and full of gaiety, and utter such original things, bring forth such droll images and comical similes, as are enough to make one half die of laughing."

"You should, however, remember, Hunter, that what is sport to you is death to these poor creatures."

"If one is to be always thinking of the probable results of the money one throws away, few would bestow charity."

"Charity! my good fellow; surely you cannot consider providing the means of buying whisky as charity?"

"By Jove I do, though; for, if I make a set of poor starving wretches forget for a few hours the pangs of hunger and cold, I think I have done a charitable action."

"Far, far from it. You have encouraged in them a propensity which, once acquired, is seldom conquered — a propensity that has, unhappily, greatly retarded the civilization and improvement of their unfortunate country."

"What a grave affair you make of a trifle, Mordant! Don't continue the lecture, there's a good fellow; for no schoolboy ever more dreaded being flogged than I do being lectured. What a place this is for falling in love! In fact, a poor devil has nothing else to do. Being in love gives one something to think of."

"Am I to conclude that you have had recourse to this *dernière ressource* for passing your time?"

"Well, and if I have I might do worse."

"That depends on the object you have selected."

"Selected! What a strange fellow you are, Mordant! Just as if a man selects the girl he is to fall in love with. According to my notion there is no choice in the affair. A man falls in love because he has nothing else to do, and because he can't help it. If a man had the choice whether he would be in love or not, it's my belief few would prefer it."

"Then, according to your notion, reason is for nothing in this the most momentous affair of a man's whole life, and on which all his happiness is to depend."

"Why, what can all the reason in the world do for him if a girl takes his fancy, and he finds he can't do without her?"

"Exercise his reason. Try absence, in general a very efficacious remedy for the love of gentlemen under twenty-five years of age, and a remedy the excellence of which you have proved on more than one occasion."

"If a man were to do that every time he falls in love, he'd never marry at all."

"And it would be better never to marry than to wed a girl to whom a man's attachment was so slight that a few months' absence could conquer it."

"But, as a fellow who is to have lots of money must marry one day or another, he may as well do it when the fancy comes into his head."

"And, when it is too late, repent it all his days."

"That he may do, when or whoever he marries; and, if a fellow ever has a good excuse for getting married, it is in country quarters, where there is not even a billiard-table, or smoking-room, or a news-room to help him to kill time; but where there are some devilish pretty girl ready to take him for better or worse."

"If such are your feelings you are in danger, my good fellow, and I earnestly advise you to ask for leave of absence and go to England, rather than rush headlong into wedlock."

"I have always thought of marriage as of a desperate leap out hunting — neck or nothing; and whenever I do marry it will be in the same spirit."

"No great compliment to the future Mrs. James Hunter."

"I'll never make *you* my confidant, Mordant, I can tell you, for you have no more feeling about love affairs than my grandmother. If you had, you could not have resisted such a bevy of beauties as this place contains. Why, by Jove! there are girls here that would put to shame the cried-up belles in London, with their faces faded by hot rooms and late hours, and their manners as languid as their faces; while the girls here are fresh and blooming as roses, and full of spirits and gaiety. But you have no heart, Mordant, that's the fact."

A deep and uncontrollable sigh might have revealed to a keener observer how erroneous was Mr. Hunter's supposition; but the latter drawing out a cigar prepared to

light it, fully convinced that his friend was a cold-hearted opponent to love and wedlock.

"Hunter, you must not infect my room with tobacco smoke," said Mordant, removing the light which Hunter was applying to the cigar, — a hint which drove away the unwelcome intruder, "whistling as he went for want of thought."

CHAPTER XX.

THE day passed over without Mordant seeing or hearing from Herbert Vernon, and when he went to the mess to dine his friend did not appear there. Whether his absence was to be taken as a favourable omen or not, Mordant could not decide; but his fears whispered that, "Perhaps Vernon, as an accepted lover, had been engaged to dine by the Countess O'Neill." The pain this supposition occasioned convinced him that his heart was still far from being in a state to look on the happiness of Vernon with the indifference into which he thought he had schooled it to bear the success of his friend.

"Where is Vernon?" demanded more than one of his brother officers; an inquiry that elicited the information that the missing gentleman had ordered some mutton broth to his room. What a transition did this intelligence create in Mordant's feelings! It revealed the whole history of Vernon's blighted hopes, and as he pictured him to his mind in the solitude of his room, too sad and depressed

to meet the eyes of his brother officers, he felt all his friendship for him revive, and the deepest sympathy take the place of the envy which, in spite of his better feelings, had previously taken possession of him. Herbert Vernon, the accepted, the happy suitor of the lovely Grace O'Neill, seated at table, *en famille*, with her and her grandmother, was too enviable a man to be thought of by Mordant without bitterness; but as the solitary occupant of a barrack-room, self-condemned to the insipid regimen of mutton broth and dry toast, furnishing a proof presumptive, if not a protest, for seclusion on the plea of indisposition, was viewed in a very different spirit, and Mordant's heart softened towards his friend as he thus pictured him. "I will not, however, break in unbidden on his solitude," thought he; "I will wait until he sends for or writes to me. I will betray no impatience to learn the result of his suit, although I cannot help feeling much. Yet why should I thus feel? What can it be to me? To accept Herbert Vernon's most generous offer would be impossible in any case less urgent than the peace of her who is dearer to me than aught else in life, and I am not so vain as to believe that I have endangered her happiness."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of Mordant, a conversation was going on between the members of the mess table.

"You have heard the commotion that Hunter has caused in the town," observed one of the officers.

"Come, come, don't make mountains of mole-hills,"

replied Hunter, looking half angry, yet deprecating the renewal of a subject that was evidently disagreeable to him.

"O, a capital scene, wasn't it?" remarked another. "Only fancy the picturesque group that presented itself to the colonel this day outside the barrack-gate, into which the sentinels with some difficulty precluded them from entering."

"I wish you 'd drop the subject; I have had quite enough of it," said Hunter, angrily.

"It would be unkind to deprive Mordant of the pleasure we all so much enjoyed," added his tormentor. "Fancy, Mordant, about a dozen mothers, unkempt and with a total disregard to cleanliness in their costume, apparently as disinclined to a contact with water as a man in a state of hydrophobia, beseeching or, rather, besieging our colonel in every possible tone of brogue, from the Kerry to the Munster, to protect their hopeful sons from the *largesse* of the rich Misther Hunter."

"Och, Sir, shure he 'll entirely destroy them," exclaimed one.

"Won't he be the death of 'em? God forgive him," cried another.

"And isn't five of the poor crathurs raving mad in their sickbeds at this blessed moment?" said a third.

"Didn't he make 'em run races till he knocked the breath out of their bodies, and then, when they stood panting, and the sweat — saving your honour's favour — running down over them like a shower of rain over a

basket of kidney pratoes, didn't he make 'em jump right into the river to swim against each other for wagers?"

"And didn't he," interrupted another speaker, throwing up her bony arms to Heaven, as if to implore its vengeance, "didn't he give 'em enough halfpence to keep six dacent families in food for a month, to spend in whisky?"

"And is it a wondher they are in their beds raving mad in a raging fever, the poor crathurs? and we, the poor mothers that bore 'em, that suckled 'em, to be kept from our hard work, by which we can only earn enough to keep life and soul together, to be sitting up all night listening to their moans and groans, and their cries for more whisky."

"Och, sure it was an unlucky day when they got the taste of it; for it's well known that childer, when *onst* they get the taste of sperits, are for all the world like the foxes when once they get an egg or a chicken, the power of a man can't keep 'em out of the poultry yard ever after."

"Sure, if they ever come back to life, after being so kilt as they are, how will we ever keep 'em from the whisky-shops?"

"It's all up wid 'em; ochone, ochone, won't they come to the gallows as sure as my name is Molly Fogarty? for wasn't it the taste for the dhrink that drove Bill Hoolihaun out of his seven senses, and made him steal a horse and kill a man that tried to prevent him?"

Captain Sitwell, who recounted this scene in a very

dramatic style, giving such very successful imitations of the various brogues of the speakers as "set the table in a roar," here paused for breath, and Hunter angrily left the mess-room, enraged at the laughter his adventures and their consequences had excited.

"And what was the result?" inquired Mordant.

"That the colonel sent over the surgeon to see the sick boys, and that Hunter, who came up in the midst of the tragi-comic scene, bestowed a liberal donation on 'the distressed mothers,' and promised never more to expose the lives of their sons to the danger of sudden transitions from heat to cold, nor their morals to the contagion of whisky-shops; on which the Irish matrons retired to their homes, blessing the rich English gentleman, whom, 'they were sure, meant no earthly harm to the poor childer, but just wished to amuse himself by a little sport.'"

"Hunter is only thoughtless," observed one of the officers, "but is a good fellow in the main."

"I hope none of those poor boys will die," said the colonel.

"By-the-by, would not this be a good opportunity for us to make a subscription to establish a school?" suggested Major Elvaston. "It would keep the children out of mischief, and give them some instruction."

"Agreed, agreed," said many voices, and before the party separated a considerable sum was subscribed for the laudable purpose proposed; and, when Hunter heard of it the following day, he largely contributed to the scheme,

saying "that he whose folly had led to the whole thing ought to give the most to carry out so good a plan."

"O Honor, have you heard how Mr. Hunter has killed half the poor children in the place?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty, entering her house in a state of great agitation.

"Now, what cock-and-a-bull-story have you got hold of, mother?" was the disrespectful reply.

"You never believe anything, Honor; but didn't I, with my own eyes, see Heaven knows how many poor wailing mothers, bemoaning and crying, go up to the barracks to demand vengeance on Mr. Hunter for having kilt their sons?"

"And don't we all know that kilt in our country does not mean killed?"

"But wasn't it cruel, Honor, for him to hurt them? You must allow it was; and the poor mothers would not say their sons were even kilt unless he had severely maltreated them."

"Mother, mother, you are just for all the world like a child — ready to believe anything, or everything, that people tell you."

"Well, it isn't very mannerly of you to tell me so. You wouldn't hear Grace O'Neill speak in that manner to her grandmother."

"Perhaps not; but the Countess O'Neill and you are very different persons."

"Perhaps we may be; but there's as great a difference between Grace O'Neill, Honor, and you — and

it may be more — than between her grandmother and me.”

“Now you’re on the high horse, mother, there will be no getting good of you for some hours; so I’ll go and take a walk.” And Honor arose to prepare for going out.

“You wouldn’t see Grace O’Neill strolling about the streets by herself, or marching with them wild young officers. Oh, Honor! how can you put yourself in the mouths of people in this manner? What will they *think*, what will they *say*, of you?”

“Hush, mother, you wouldn’t be using such strange phrases as ‘putting myself in the mouths of people.’ Such a manner of speaking makes the officers laugh at you.”

“More shame for them, and for you to tell me of their impudence.” And Mrs. O’Flaherty’s face grew red with anger.

“There, again — off you go, mother. Once for all, don’t be foolish — don’t mind what people say or think. Isn’t it the first wish of your heart to see me married to a rich man? Is it, or is it not?”

“Yes, certainly; but — mind, Honor — *properly, respectably married*. Sure what else do I think of from morning till night?”

“Well, then, mother, let me play my own game. I know what I’m about; and you’ll see that before long, I’ll be married to a rich man.”

“God grant it, Honor, for that would be a joyful day

to me. And, now you talk of marriage, it reminds me that I saw a wedding-ring in the candle last night as plain as ever I saw anything in my life; and that's a good sign, my dear."

"How can you be so superstitious, mother, as to pay any attention to dreams and signs? It was only yesterday you told me that you heard the *Banshee* wailing under your window the night before."

"Well, and so I did, Honor, as sure as I am now sitting here."

"Nonsense, mother, it was only the cat; for I saw it. But I must be off; for I have business on my hands that must not be neglected."

"Honor, Honor, for the love of God take care what you are about. It would be the death of me — it would bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave — if you got yourself into any scrape; and you're so wild and giddy that I am always in a fever when you are out of my sight."

"How can I bring your grey hairs to the grave, when you have had them cut off and wear a wig? Wild and giddy as you think me, I know what I'm about; and, though I may make a fool of somebody, no one shall make a fool of me; I can tell you;" and off walked the reckless girl, leaving her weak and foolish mother to reflect on the hints thrown out by her in their recent conversation.

"She's such a wilful girl!" soliloquised Mrs. O'Flaherty, "that all I can say makes no impression on her; but yet,

somehow or other, I can't help thinking she 'll manage to get a husband for herself better than if I were to interfere with her plans, for she's very cunning, and afraid of nothing. It's plain to be seen that this rich young officer, Mr. Hunter, whom every one says has oceans of gold, has taken a great fancy to her, though I could see that at first he rather disliked her. She has talked him into it; and, if she can persuade him to marry her, sure her fortune, and mine too, would be made. All this will be well and good; but I had much rather that she was courted as Grace O'Neill is, that is, that those who have any thought of her would come here respectful and distant like as if they considered it a great favour and honour to be allowed to come sometimes, and not too often neither, in short behave to her as gentlemen do to Grace O'Neill and her grandmother treating them as if they were queens, instead of being as much at their ease here, laughing, joking, and quizzing every one, and me more than any one else, until I don't know what to think or say. But it's no use fretting. One can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as the saying is; and I can no more make Honor like Grace O'Neill. How *she* keeps men at a distance! *Her* grandmother never has the least occasion to speak to her not to do this, or not to say t'other, while I'm always on thorns when Honor is playing off her tricks — quizzing one, flattering another, and trying to make fools of all, when she doesn't care a farthing for the whole set put together. I'm often quite ashamed, and don't know which way to turn. But it's

no use fretting, as I said before. With such a daughter as Honor, it's like having a lottery ticket, that may turn up a prize and make a fortune, or a blank and half kill one with disappointment. Judy! Judy!"

"Coming, Ma'am."

"Judy, just give me a cup of tea, with a spoonful of whisky in it. Mind, *ONLY* a teaspoonful, for I have a stitch in my stomach."

Exit Judy, muttering to herself as she descended to the kitchen to prepare the beverage, "Surely the ould missis has so many stitches, and takes so many teaspoonfuls of whisky in the tea to cure 'em, she'll be sure to be sewn up;" and the old woman, with the humour peculiar to her country folk, indulged a hearty laugh at her own pleasantry. "I suppose," added Judy, "that a teaspoon means a table-spoonful; but, as I'm in doubt, I'll just give her the benefit of my uncertainty, and make it a gravy-spoonful. Poor ould lady, 't will do her no harm, as I know by experience, for 't will only loosen the strings of her tongue, and then she'll be for telling me what a miserable woman she is to have lost a husband that bothered the life of her, or else she'll fall asleep, and then she won't know how long Miss Honor has been out, and won't begin quarrelling when she comes in."

"Are you sure, Judy, that there's *only* a teaspoonful of whisky in this tea, for it smells mighty strong?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"I'll take my oath, Ma'am, there's not a drop more than a spoonful."

"I'm very poorly, Judy."

"I dare say you are, Ma'am, and no wonder, you have so much fretting."

"True for you, Judy. No one knows what I go through. To have lost such a husband! Sure, when he was alive, I had nothing in the whole world to think of but to keep him quiet. He'd never let me meddle nor make in anything, for he'd have everything his own way."

"That must have been a great comfort to you, Ma'am."

"Only, sometimes, he'd fly into such passions, and then, Judy, he'd push me and beat me. Oh, oh! when I think of how many times I have been obliged to keep my room, Judy, from the black eyes he has given me — oh, oh!"

"Don't cry so, Ma'am, you'll make yourself quite ill, indeed you will. Compose yourself a bit."

"But when his passion was over, Judy, then he would be so good-humoured, and he'd say he was sorry for having hurt my feelings. Oh! oh! oh!"

"What a polite gentleman he must have been, Ma'am, to call blacking your eyes hurting your feelings."

"Yes, Judy, he was very polite when he wanted to make friends. Oh! oh! what a miserable woman I am to have lost him!"

CHAPTER XXI.

"WHAT can have become of Sir Henry Travers's letter?" said the Countess O'Neill, turning over the leaves of her blotting-book. "I left it on my table, I am perfectly sure, yet I can find it nowhere." And she examined among her books, thinking the letter might have got under one of them.

"I did not see it," replied her granddaughter, "and, as it cannot be found, I fear it may have been blown into the street through the window."

"That would be very disagreeable; for, if taken up and read, a publicity would be given to Sir Henry's proposal that I much wish to avoid, and which could not be agreeable to him."

"How strange his proposing for me, who have never given him the slightest encouragement!"

"Very true, my dearest child; but rich men in general (and Sir Henry Travers in particular) are prone to think that their fortunes, if not themselves, are too tempting to be resisted, and more especially by girls who are not largely dowered."

"Which poor opinion of my sex renders me less compassionate for any pain which my rejection may inflict on him."

"We must, however, treat him with politeness and respect, Grace; for a man can pay a woman no higher compliment than to solicit her hand."

"I wish he would transfer his attentions to Florence or Kate Fitzgerald — they would not, perhaps, refuse him."

"I wish so, too, Grace; for poor Lady Fitzgerald was telling me, the last day she was here, how desirous she is to have her daughters married."

"They also desire it, and have told me as much. How odd that, with a kind father and mother, and with every indulgence beneath the paternal roof, daughters should wish to leave their parents."

"I have a presentiment, darling, that ere long another opportunity will be afforded you of leaving your fond old grandmother, and a much more tempting one than that which we have just declined."

"However tempting the offer may be, nothing shall ever induce me to leave you, dearest grandmother," and as Grace spoke, a bright blush overpread her cheeks.

"But how few men, my child, would like to have their gay establishment hampered with the perpetual presence of their wife's mother, much less of her grandmother, whose age and infirmities would render her residence even less desirable. My greatest wish on earth, darling, is to see you happily settled in life before 'I go hence, and am no more seen;' and, well aware of the obstacle which your persistence in not separating from me would oppose to your marrying, I must, once for all, tell you, darling, that when you marry, my determination is taken not to reside beneath the same roof with you. But don't weep" (the tears had started in Grace's eyes), "don't be alarmed,

although I will not reside beneath the same roof, I have no objection, provided your future husband does not oppose it, to procure an abode as close to yours as can be found, so that no day may pass without my seeing my own Grace."

"I could not love a husband who was not as anxious for your society as I am, my dear grandmother;" and Grace arose and fondly embraced the countess.

"Bless, bless you, my own child."

"A letter from the Hon. Lieut. Vernon, Madam," said Patrick O'Donohough, entering the room and presenting the epistle on a silver waiter. "His servant attends for an answer."

Patrick glanced at his young mistress, as he invariably styled Grace, and failed not to notice an expression of strong dissatisfaction on her countenance. "It is as I suspected," thought he, as he left the apartment. "She doesn't like this same Mr. Vernon, although, I must own, he is a fine young man. I'd lay a wager of a bottle of wine that the letter contains a proposal of marriage, and, what's more, that it won't be accepted, although Lieut. the Hon. Mr. Vernon is a fine young man; ay, and a sensible and good one, too; and will be, as I hear, a very rich lord. The young lady's heart is, I strongly suspect, pre-engaged. What else could make her grow so thoughtful, so grave-like? — she that used to be as gay as a lark, her clear sweet voice ringing in my ears as she moved from room to room. She has left off singing now, or when she

does sit down to the piano, to please the countess, I have remarked that she sings only melancholy songs. But I've heard tell that the nightingale never sings so sweetly until its breast is pierced by a thorn; and sure is not the dart of love in a maiden's breast the same as the thorn in the bird's? But there's the bell—I must answer it."

"Patrick, tell Mr. Vernon's servant he need not wait. I will send an answer."

Patrick stole a look at his young lady, whose countenance, to him who had so long studied it, revealed that the contents of the letter brought by Mr. Herbert Vernon's servant had afforded her no pleasure.

"Yes, it's just as I suspected, she won't be Mrs. Herbert Vernon I see plainly; but I have a strong notion that, if the proposal came from a certain gentleman, the first letter of whose name is Captain Mordant, she would not look so discontented."

Having dismissed Mr. Vernon's servant, Patrick resumed his cogitations. "I can't make out why the said Captain Mordant has left off coming here," thought Patrick, "and I think my young lady is as much puzzled and more distressed by his absence than I am; and yet, on second thoughts, I believe she can hardly be more uneasy about it than I am, for sure whatever troubles her must trouble me, who have no interest or care for any one in life but for her grandmother and herself, the last ties on earth that remain to me of my dear lost master. Oh! what a pity that he did not live to see his grandchild; how he would

have doted down on her; but sure he never saw his own daughter till he saw her in Heaven. I often think what a blessed meeting it must have been. Thanks be to God, she could only give him pleasant tidings. She could tell him, and that must be a great comfort to his mind, that his widow never took another husband in his place, never took off her mourning for him, and that his poor faithful servant, Patrick O'Donohough, devoted his life, as in duty bound, to the widow, her child, *his* child, and grandchild, and hopes, when he leaves this world, to be allowed to serve and wait on his adored master in a better one!" and Patrick applied a handkerchief to his tearful eyes. "I don't know how it is," resumed he after a pause, "but there's something about Captain Mordant that always reminds me of my noble master. There's the same stately air, which seems natural to the captain as it was to Count O'Neill. There is the proud glance of the eyes, and the sweet smile which never grows into a laugh, but returns to a thoughtful expression, that I so often remarked in my dear master. I made sure he was in love with my young lady, and I can't help feeling sure of it still, for all he so seldom comes here now; for how many times, when he little thought I observed him, have I not seen him, early in the morning and late at night, pass before this house and look up at the windows with his heart, and a sorrowful one it seemed to be, in his eyes? How well I remember reading in a book that my dear master used to study for hours one particular passage that said,

"The course of true love never did run smooth;
But either it was different in blood,
Or else misgraffed in respect of years;
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends;
Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it."

How hard is it, then, for poor lovers to be happy with so many things to interfere between 'em! Sure I know by sad experience how many obstacles there are! And wouldn't I now be a solitary and miserable old man if I hadn't placed all my hopes and dependence for happiness on seeing my young mistress happy? When we get old we must find our happiness in helping to make that of others. I hear that Captain Mordant, though of a great and noble family, is poor, being only a second son, and all the fortune entailed on the elder. Sure what an unnatural law it is that makes such a difference between the children of the same father and mother! One rich and enjoying every luxury money can give, and the other wanting the common comforts of life, and only because the first came into this world a year or two before the second! Sure it's enough to make younger brothers hate their elder ones. I've a strong suspicion that it's being a younger brother and poor that makes Captain Mordant keep away from my young lady. He finds he couldn't often see her without wishing never to leave her, and, as he isn't rich enough to propose, he thinks it more honourable to avoid her. But what if he has found this out too late? If the poor gentleman already loves her more than himself, and, worse still, if *she* loves

him, isn't it a pity, ay, and a sin too, that they should be kept asunder? If he could just have a hint given him that Miss O'Neill, instead of having only a poor fortune, as people suppose, will have one quite sufficient for every comfort, though not for grandeur, perhaps he would take courage, come here as he used to do at first, and end by making his proposals. How can I manage this? Let me see; I might tell his servant, but then he is a poor, ignorant, vulgar fellow, not fit for a gentleman to talk to, so he dare not take the liberty to speak to his master, or repeat what I might say. Lieutenant Vernon's servant is a superior man; he has education, and his master often talks to him when he is dressing. I'll tell it to *him* as a great secret, make him swear never to repeat it to mortal, and that will be sure to induce him to tell it to his master, who will probably repeat it to Captain Mordant. But what if Captain Mordant should be too proud and high-minded to propose to a lady richer than himself? and such things do happen sometimes. Ay, that would be a bad job! Well, well, I must only wait, and watch as a sentinel does, and do my best to bring this young couple together, if, as I shrewdly suspect, they have set their hearts on each other."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of the faithful Patrick O'Donohough, the Countess O'Neill and her granddaughter were concocting a suitable answer to the letter received from Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"The offer is so good a one, so suitable in all points

of view, my child, that it should not be lightly rejected," observed the countess.

"Yes, dearest grandmother, I grant Mr. Vernon appears to be a very amiable young man, and that his position is unexceptional; but I do not, and I feel quite sure I never shall, entertain for him that preference a person ought to feel to a suitor she accepts. He has not created the slightest interest in my heart; I feel even more than indifference for him, owing to his persistence in seeking to win me when the marked coldness with which I have submitted to, rather than received, his attentions ought to have taught him that he had nothing to hope."

"I must admit, Grace, that you certainly gave him no encouragement. Nevertheless, may we not look on his persistence as a proof of the steadiness and depth of his attachment?"

"Or the obstinacy of his character."

"I never saw you disposed to judge so harshly before."

Grace blushed, and her grandmother became more than ever convinced that a preference for another had a great influence in the prompt rejection her granddaughter had decided on giving to Mr. Vernon's suit.

"Perhaps, on a longer acquaintance, you may appreciate Mr. Vernon's good qualities more highly, my dear," resumed the Countess O'Neill, wishing to probe Grace's heart more profoundly.

"Be assured, dearest grandmother, no length of ac-

quaintance, no intimacy, could change my sentiments with regard to him. He may possess every virtue, every good quality; but, while admitting that he does, I should still remain as utterly indifferent towards him as now."

"Then I suppose nothing is left for us but to send a polite refusal."

"Nothing. And let me entreat you, dearest grandmother, not to ask me to answer the note he enclosed to you for me. Say all you think right, but let him decidedly understand that he must not hope for any change in my sentiments."

The letter was written, and confided to Patrick O'Donohough for delivery, who, feeling the importance of his mission, arrayed himself with peculiar care to fulfil it. "Poor gentleman," thought he, "I bring him news that will make his heart ache, if I am not greatly mistaken."

"Here, Mr. Pigott, is a letter from the Countess O'Neill for Mr. Vernon," said Patrick, addressing himself to the *valet de chambre* of that gentleman.

"I hope its contents will afford Mr. Vernon satisfaction, for I have seldom seen him betray so much anxiety as about this expected letter. He has paced up and down his room, rang the bell repeatedly, and shown the utmost anxiety to receive it. Between you and I, Mr. O'Donohough, I suspect that the one I took to your house this morning contained a proposal of marriage. Indeed, nothing short of it could have occasioned so much anxiety to Mr. Vernon. I must say that, as far as my own feelings are

concerned, I entertain much less repugnance to this affair than I anticipated; for, although I have never lived with a married gentleman, having resigned my situation no less than three times solely because the noblemen I served were about to marry, I should be tempted to remain with Mr. Vernon; I like him so much, and have heard your young lady so well spoken of."

"My young lady, Mr. Pigott, is nothing less than an angel."

"It is to be wished, however, that she was rich. Not because Mr. Vernon requires a fortune — for he will have a noble one, and has at present a most liberal allowance — but just because noble families, when their sons marry untitled ladies, expect that there will be lots of money to make up for the want of rank."

"But sure, if my young lady has no title herself, her grandmother has."

"Why, to tell you the plain truth, Mr. O'Donohough, we in England attach very little importance to foreign titles."

"What! do you mean to say that the title of a count of the Holy Roman Empire, bestowed on Count O'Neill by the Empress herself, for his noble deeds, isn't better than half the titles of your new-fangled nobility, whose grandfathers got rank on account of their money?"

The rising colour of Patrick, and a certain animation of manner peculiar to him when displeased, convinced Mr. Pigott he had touched on delicate ground when he spoke

disparagingly of the title of the Countess O'Neill; and, unwilling to offend Patrick, he said, that, for his part, he entertained the highest deference for counts and countesses of the Holy Roman Empire; but added, "that Mr. O'Donohough must admit that other foreign titles could not be estimated so highly" — an admission that perfectly soothed the rising anger of Patrick.

"Perhaps, Mr. Pigott, you may not be aware that Miss O'Neill, although she may not be termed an heiress, has a very considerable fortune well secured to her, besides diamonds and other valuables, the gifts of the Emperor of Austria to her grandmother."

"Has she, indeed? I am very glad to hear it. It gives importance to the marriage — it equalizes it, as one might say — for in England noble families are not particularly desirous that their sons should marry Irish ladies."

"I suppose not, Mr. Pigott; for as real Irish ladies, descended, as Miss O'Neill is, from the Irish kings, are so much above the English nobility, they are afraid their daughters-in-law will look down on them."

Whether Mr. Pigott quite coincided with this explanation or not we do not know, but he was too prudent to dissent from it; and Patrick, thinking that it was high time that the letter of which he had been the bearer should reach the hands of the gentleman to whom it was addressed, observed with an air of lofty dignity that he would no longer prevent Mr. Pigott from delivering the

letter, which, he said, Mr. Vernon was so impatient to receive; and, with a bow that would not have shamed a gentleman of the chamber at the court at Vienna, took his leave.

"There's no talking with these touchy Irish without offending their pride," observed Mr. Pigott, when Patrick had withdrawn out of hearing; while the latter muttered, "Nothing enrages me like these English, with their false notions of the Irish, and their nonsensical vanity about their own upstart nobility. What's an English lord to an Irish king, I should like to know? Why, Miss O'Neill has better blood in her veins than all the nobility in England put together."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE advice given by Lady Fitzgerald to her daughters had not been thrown away, and Sir Geoffrey, following her dictates, henceforth addressed his hospitality more exclusively to the unmarried gentlemen of his neighbourhood than he had hitherto done. These, flattered by the frequent invitations they received to Ballymacross Castle, where none of the *élite* of the officers of the — Regiment were engaged to meet them, grew into habits of closer intimacy than formerly, and often declared to each other, "that the Fitzgeralds, after all, were very agreeable neighbours, and the girls pleasant and sociable, now that one had got to know them better." The phrase "after all"

invariably implies that the speaker had not always considered the individuals spoken of in so favourable a light as at present. And such was precisely the case in this instance; for so wholly had the attention of the ladies of Ballymacross Castle been directed to the few stray Englishmen of family who ventured to this remote part of Ireland, tempted by curiosity to view a country of which less is known to them than of any other portion of Europe, or to the few officers of noble or rich families in England quartered in the sister kingdom, that the neighbouring gentlemen had formerly felt themselves aggrieved by the preference shown to men whom they were by no means disposed to think their superiors. Now, the system hitherto adopted at Ballymacross Castle was changed: those who previously had seen little to admire in its young ladies, because viewed through the medium of prejudice, began to find out many good qualities in them. "The formality and reserve for which I disliked them wears off when one sees them oftener," observed Mr. Oliphant Hennessy, a neighbouring squire, possessed of an estate of some three or four thousand a year, who kept a pack of hounds and an open house for his brother sportsmen.

"They acquired that formality from their constant association with the English, who assume reserve for the purpose of concealing their natural dulness," said Mr. Mac Vigers, a hearty hater of England and the English.

"For my part," remarked Sir Henry Travers, "I think the young ladies of Ballymacross Castle peculiarly well

bred and polite, and the antiquity of their descent is an additional title to my respect."

"Antiquity is the last recommendation I should desire in a wife," observed one of the speakers.

"I applied it to the descent of the ladies, and not to them personally," replied Sir Henry Travers, with an air of offended dignity.

"You ought to speak well of them, Travers, if only in gratitude for all the kind things they say of you," remarked Mr. Mac Vigers.

"Of me, did you say?" inquired the baronet, looking much pleased.

"Come, come, Travers, don't look so innocent. You must have seen that Miss Fitzgerald has a more than common interest in you; and I can answer that your name is never mentioned before her that she does not declare you to be a very superior man," said Mr. Oliphant Hennessy.

"I admire Miss Kate so much," resumed he, "that, if I had not a strong suspicion that Mac Vigers has made a hole in her heart, I'd lay my hand and fortune at her feet, as the novels say."

"Then you know more than I do," was the reply of Mr. Mac Vigers, "and probably more than the young lady herself."

"I am so sure of what I say on this point, Mac Vigers, that I am ready to lay a wager that if you pop the question to Miss Kate she will not say no."

The fact was, that so skilfully had the young ladies of

Ballymacross Castle applied their flatteries to each and all of the neighbouring bachelors that they had conciliated enemies into friends; and, although some might not be disposed to marry them, all were inclined to help them to husbands. Sir Henry Travers and Mr. Mac Vigors, being known to be the vainest and richest men, were selected by the others as suitable husbands for the Misses Fitzgerald, to whom they were desirous to give what they termed "a good turn," namely, to assist in getting them married. Nor had these gentlemen asserted any falsehood when they assured the baronet and Mr. Mac Vigors of the tender impression which they believed had been made by them on the hearts of the Misses Fitzgerald, for the latter having selected the two richest men in their neighbourhood for the subject of their peculiar commendations had led to the belief that Mr. Oliphant Hennessy expressed.

A vain and foolish man is never more vulnerable to the flattery of one woman than when he is smarting under the rejection of another. The unsought preference of the one is a balm to the wound inflicted on his *amour propre* by the other; hence he turns with peculiar satisfaction to the person who administers it. Never previously had Sir Henry Travers bestowed a thought on Miss Fitzgerald; but from the hour that Mr. Oliphant Hennessy revealed the commendations bestowed on him by that lady he thought of nothing else, and now wondered he ever could have accorded a preference over her to Miss O'Neill. "I'll show that young lady that, though *she* may reject me,

there are others who have seen the best society in England, and, of course, the most distinguished men, yet who prefer me," thought the baronet to himself, "and when she sees Lady Travers in her bridal dress, and wearing my family diamonds, she may regret her folly in refusing my offer."

The combined wishes of exciting the regret of Miss O'Neill, and of proving his gratitude to Miss Fitzgerald for her admiration of him, led him the following day to pay a visit to Ballymacross Castle, and, as he gazed on the face of her on whom he intended to confer the favour of his hand, he discovered a charm in its expression which two days before he would have positively denied. His unusual attention pleased her and she became more animated and agreeable. The morning sitting-room, in which he had been received, being a very spacious one, a conversation, *sotto voce*, might be carried on without being overheard by the persons at the other end of it and Miss Fitzgerald was opportunely placed at a bay-window at the opposite side from her mother and sister, seated at her drawing-table. The baronet, under the pretence of examining her drawing, took a chair by her side. "A room," observed he, "never looks furnished, nor habitable, unless a lady surrounded by the objects that denote her elegant occupations makes the principal point of attraction in it. Don't you agree with me, Miss Fitzgerald?"

"The presence of women certainly improves the appearance of a room," was the reply.

"I wish I could find a lady who would render my large rooms habitable;" and the speaker heaved a sigh.

"I should think, Sir Henry, *you* could have no difficulty in meeting one."

"Ah! Miss Fitzgerald, might I venture to hope that *you* would do me this honour, that *you* would accept my house for your home, and its master for your husband, how happy I should feel."

The lady looked down, seemed embarrassed, and muttered something about "the proposal being so sudden, so unexpected."

"Only say that I may hope — that I am not disagreeable to you."

"Oh! what a word!"

"May I, then, flatter myself?"

"Yes, Sir Henry, I will not trifle with your feelings. I will be yours."

And Miss Fitzgerald placed her hand in his, and he raised it to his lips. Lady Fitzgerald and her second daughter, who had been watchful spectators of this scene, although both affected to be wholly unconscious of it, exchanged glances of satisfaction; that of Miss Kate, however, being much less sincere than her mother's, as she envied her sister this conquest, notwithstanding that she had often depreciated Sir Henry.

"May I speak to your father, my dear Florence?"

"If you wish it, Sir Henry. But don't you think it

would be better to tell mamma, who will be surprised, and perhaps shocked, at this our almost *tête-à-tête*?"

"Yes, charming Florence." And the baronet arose, and proceeded to the other end of the room with an air of great dignity. "Permit me, my lady," said he, "to hope that your ladyship will sanction the happiness your amiable daughter has conferred on me by accepting the offer of my hand?"

"I can have no objection, my dear Sir Henry, quite the contrary; for although Florence might have been most advantageously settled in England, and in families of the highest distinction, I always wished to see her established in our own immediate neighbourhood; and to whom could I feel more happiness in confiding her destiny than to Sir Henry Travers?"

"And you, Miss Kate, I trust will not object to me for a brother?"

"Certainly not, Sir Henry. I could not have one more to my satisfaction."

"I wish particularly to see Sir Geoffrey. Perhaps, my lady, you could direct me where to find him, or send a messenger to request his return?"

The bell was rang, and a servant was instructed to go in search of his master; and, luncheon being now announced, Sir Henry Travers, nothing loath, led his future mother-in-law into the dining-room, followed by the Misses Fitzgerald, who exchanged sundry glances as side by side they proceeded.

"I give you joy," whispered Miss Kate. "You have at last secured a husband, such as he is."

"Thank you, Kate, and I hope you may soon secure one also."

"I hardly know whether it would not be better to remain an old maid, and suffer the penalty of leading apes in a certain place not to be named to ears polite, than to lead a fool on earth, Florence."

"*Chacun a son goût, ma chère,*" was the answer; and the interlocutors took their places at the table, looking, if not feeling, all amiability.

Lady Fitzgerald was in high good humour, her eldest daughter perfectly well pleased with *herself* if not with her future *husband*, and Miss Kate, hoping that she, too, would soon have a suitor. "One marriage in a family often leads to another," thought she; "and although our neighbourhood offers little choice Heaven knows! I have made up my mind not to be fastidious."

Already had Lady Fitzgerald changed her manner to her eldest daughter. The future Lady Travers was a much more important person in her eyes than the mature Miss Fitzgerald, who had remained so long without ever receiving a single offer of marriage that the thoughtful and anxious mother had begun to entertain serious fears that she never would, and, consequently, was delighted at the prospect of a good settlement for her. Sir Henry's appetite was by no means impaired by his position. He partook of everything on the table, pronounced all ex-

cellent, cast many tender looks at the *dame de ses pensées*, and assumed the air of a conqueror of hearts. Miss Fitzgerald, according to the custom of ladies in her peculiar position from time immemorial, eat little and looked interesting, her thoughts occupied by plans for passing future seasons in London, no longer as a neglected spinster, but as a fashionable wife, and wishing that so much good was not coupled with a very tiresome and empty-headed husband. Sir Geoffrey now arrived, and, having declared himself hungry as a hunter, he commenced doing ample justice to the substantial viands placed before him. The more than ordinary cordiality of his wife and daughters to their guest might have enlightened any other man as to the fact that a new relation must have taken place between the parties, but he was too intent on satisfying his hunger to notice anything but the excellence of the food he was devouring until, having washed it down with some old claret, he laid aside his knife and fork.

"You sent for me, my dear Travers," said he, looking round to ascertain that the servants had left the room. "Anything new? Any parish business?"

"Something infinitely more interesting to me, Sir Geoffrey, and which, I hope, will be agreeable to you. I have obtained the permission of Miss Fitzgerald, and the sanction of her excellent mother, to solicit the honour of her hand in marriage."

"The devil you have! And a very good job too. I give my hearty consent, for there is no man whom I

should prefer as a son-in-law; only remember, my dear Travers, Florence's sole fortune consists in her personal merits and good qualities, in which I really consider her rich. I like to be open and frank, so I tell you the truth at once."

"And I assure you, Sir Geoffrey, I seek no fortune but the young lady herself."

"Then it's a settled thing, and I heartily wish you joy. Come here, Florence, my dear, and you too, Travers. Here is her hand, and right glad am I to bestow it on a neighbour I so highly esteem, instead of her being transplanted to England."

Sir Geoffrey placed his daughter's hand in that of her future husband, and with moistened eyes pronounced a blessing on the pair, while Lady Fitzgearld applied her laced pocket handkerchief to her eyes and echoed the paternal blessing.

"You'll stay and dine with us, my dear Travers, won't you?"

"Very sorry, but unfortunately I have two or three friends to dine with me."

"Well, come to-morrow, and every day you can spare, I hope; for now we may consider you as one of the family."

Sir Henry Travers took a tender leave of his future bride, and rode home in a state of great elation of spirits. "Florence," thought he, "if not a beauty, is a very elegant girl, it must be allowed; possesses the air *distingué*

and ease of manner which only high society can bestow, and is well calculated to perform the honours of my house and table. She will look very dignified in my family diamonds and dressed in velvet. I like to see ladies wear velvet, especially if they happen to be tall and stately, which fortunately she is. I hope she will never hear of my having been refused by Miss O'Neill. It would vex and mortify her, for women don't like such things. Florence, as her mother more than hinted, has refused several good offers in England, which is certainly very flattering to me, who am the preferred. I don't think, however, that I have anything to dread from the Countess O'Neill, or her granddaughter, on the subject of the latter having refused me. They are not at all addicted to gossiping, so that my secret is safe. I cannot account for my not having at once solicited Miss Fitzgerald instead of Miss O'Neill, who is too young and inexperienced to do the honours of my house with dignity. If she knew more of the world, and had mixed in the higher circles, she would have been wiser than to have rejected me. Miss Fitzgerald, whose taste has been cultivated, and who has seen the most distinguished men in England, has preferred me to all others; and this may well console me for the slight put on me by Miss O'Neill."

Such were the reflections in which Sir Henry Travers indulged as he rode home, where he found Mr. Oliphant Hennessy and Mr. Mac Vigors already arrived to dinner.

"You have paid a long visit, Travers," said the first;
Country Quarters. I.

"and, if I may judge by your countenance, a very agreeable one. How are the Misses Fitzgerald? We learned here that you had rode over to Ballymacross Castle, and we began to think we should have to dine without you, you stayed so late."

"Yes," observed Mr. Mac Vigors, "Hennessy and I have been saying that you could not do a wiser thing than to marry Miss Fitzgerald."

"A more agreeable thing I am sure I could not do," replied the baronet; "and, not to keep friends like you longer in ignorance of my good fortune, I am happy to tell you I have proposed, and am accepted."

The gentlemen wished Sir Henry joy, shook him cordially by the hand, and predicted him much happiness in his marriage with a lady so every way amiable.

"Yet I don't know whether, if I had been in your place, I should not have preferred Miss Kate," observed Mr. Mac Vigors, "for she is a very fine girl, and some years younger than her sister."

"I admire Miss Fitzgerald more," replied Sir Henry Travers; "but, even if I did not, the circumstance of her being the eldest daughter of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald would be a recommendation in my eyes; and, as regards them, such I am sure is their respect for me, that had they an older daughter they would, I doubt not, have given her to me."

This speech was uttered so gravely, and with an air of such dignity, that Messrs. Hennessy and Mac Vigors, who

found it difficult to refrain from laughing, exchanged glances. The baronet retired to change his morning habiliments for evening ones, leaving his friends at liberty to indulge their suppressed laughter.

"Capital! capital!" exclaimed Mac Vigors; "was there ever a better notion than that of Travers's thinking the parents show their respect by giving their eldest daughter to him?"

"Travers is a strange fellow," observed Mr. Hennessy, "and parents in general would feel glad if all bachelors with good fortunes were of the same opinion as him! It would be a great help to elder daughters."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE frequent meetings and solitary walks of Honor O'Flaherty with Mr. Hunter, much as they wished them to be concealed, after some time excited remark, and became the topic of conversation among a certain class, the station in life of which was not the most elevated nor the most prone to put a favourable construction on her inconsiderate conduct. Miss White, the milliner, a very censorious old maid, and whose shop was a favourite lounge of the officers, wondered whether Miss O'Flaherty would have the cleverness to secure a husband by all her roving about with a certain young officer, and declared that if she did not it wouldn't be for the want of trying, though it was very doubtful whether she had chosen the right way. The

grocer shook his head and whispered to his wife, "that he was afraid Miss Honor was making herself too cheap in walking about so much with that foolish young officer who had behaved so cruelly to the poor boys;" and his wife, a great prude, "thanked goodness that when *she* was single no one could say that *she* was ever seen rambling about with any man." Even Mrs. Casey, the laundress, commented on Miss O'Flaherty's open flirtation, and wished, for the honour of Ireland, "that she wouldn't go gallivanting about with officers;" and when she one day met Judy, the servant of Mrs. O'Flaherty, could not resist informing her of the reports in circulation about Miss Honor. "Then botheration to ye for a pack of backbiters," said Judy, highly indignant at the liberty taken with the name of her young lady. "Mayn't a lady take a walk with a young gentleman without ye'r making evil out of it? There's no more harm in Miss Honor than in a young kid that frisks about from side to side butting at one after another, and having her merry laugh *with* all, ay, be my soul, and *at* all. I'd like to see the man that would dare attempt the least freedom with her; she'd soon teach him manners, that's what she'd do; so, Misthis Casey, if you wish to keep friends with me, let me hear no more of your nonsense about Miss Honor, for as well might you expect to have no froth on your soapsuds as to expect that Miss Honor O'Flaherty will conform herself to the opinions of you and the likes of you." "Sure, Judy, you needn't take it up so hot; I meant no harm, quite the contrary, I only wished you might know

what people said, and just give a hint to the young lady, to be more on her guard." "Arrah, Mrs. Casey, don't be putting your mouth on half-plates, to try to persuade me that you had a good motive in repeating the scandal of a pack of gossips. No, no, I know the nature of 'em better: the low would like to pull down the high, and are never so pleased as when they can pick a hole in the coat of a neighbour; so let me advise you to put your tongue in your pocket, and mind your soap, starch, and blue, instead of mentioning the names of your betters."

And off marched Judy, highly irate that Miss Honor's name should be used so freely. "I've often tould her how it would be," said Judy to herself. "She 'll get herself into the mouths of all the tag, rag, and bobtail in the place. Oh! sure and wouldn't it be the death of her mother if it came to her ears! But be my troth I'll up and tell Miss Honor how her krackter is tore to pieces, and that may open her eyes to the folly of gallivanting with Mr. Hunter. Sure, if he has any thought of popping the question, she has given him plinty of opportunities, and ought now to bring him to the point at once."

"You look as cross as a cat, Judy," observed Honor O'Flaherty, the night of the day that the evil comments had reached the ear of Judy.

"And no wonder, Miss Honor. Sure ain't the heart of me beating against my ribs, and fluttering and fluttering for all the world like a poor bird shut up in a cage, ever since I heard what is said of you in regard to your galli-

wanting about with that young officer. Ochone! Miss Honor, did I ever think that you'd demean yourself so, and bring down the ould and grand family you have sprung from, so low." And tears rolled down the coarse red face of the speaker.

A deep blush of mingled anger and shame dyed the cheeks of Honor, for she had enough Irish pride to resent the insult offered by the censure of Judy's gossiping acquaintances, though not sufficient sense to prevent her giving cause for these remarks.

"What an old fool you must be, Judy, to mind such nonsense, and to repeat it?" observed Honor, endeavouring to assume an air of indifference.

"Don't say that, don't say that, Miss Honor. Wouldn't you feel shocked and angry, ay, be my soul, and sorrowful too, if you heard any one you loved and respected spoken ill of? Sure evil tongues leave sore blisters on whatever they touch — blisters that no healing plaister can take away the mark of."

"Nonsense, Judy; do you think I mind what a set of low-born, ignorant brutes say of me?"

"Arragh, *cuishtla ma chree*, if you received a kick from a horse, would it make any difference whether the beast was a thorough-bred one or a cart-horse? or, if you got a bad cut, would it matter whether it was done by a horn-handled knife or a gold-handled one? No, be my troth, it wouldn't; the hurt would be all the same. Scandal, Miss

Honor, *mavournen*, is for all the world like gould leaf, a small bit may be drawn out to cover a great surface."

"But I know right well what I am about, Judy. I'll soon be married to a rich gentleman, and, when the knot is tied, what can these backbiters who have been talking to you say then?"

"Faith they'll say you talked and walked the gentleman into the marriage, and wouldn't that be very vexing? If this gentleman wants to marry you, Miss Honor, why can't he come and propose for you genteelly to the ould missis? She'd make no objections, I know, and you seem well disposed for it; and, then, sure you might have an elegant wedding, plinty of white ribbons and gloves, and all the grandees in the neighbourhood to be present; and that's what would stop all tongues and make me hold up my head to the longest day I have to live."

"But if there be reasons, Judy, why the business can't be settled publicly in this way, reasons that can't be got over?"

"Faith, Miss, if the *raisins* were as big ás figs I wouldn't, if I were in your shoes, be stealing into a marriage as if I was a thief. Would a lady of such good ould blood as is flowing in your blue veins, at father and mother's side, ever consent to steal into a church by the window to be married, instead of walking dacently in through the door?"

"Listen to me, Judy: Mr. Hunter's father is a very rich man, and would never consent to his son's marrying a girl

who has no fortune; but once we are married he can't help himself, and will forgive the stolen marriage."

"And if I were you, Miss Honor, I'd scorn to steal into a family, if they were as rich as Brian Boru, by the back door, when the hall door ought to be thrown open to receive me. If they have gould, haven't you blood to refine it? Don't you spring from the Irish kings, and what could they want more?"

"They wouldn't give a pin for that," replied Miss Honor, looking embarrassed.

"Not give a pin to get a daughter-in-law who would bring a fine old pedigree into their mean family? Why, they must be downright Hottentots, Miss Honor; and, if I were you, I'd scorn 'em if they had all the gould that ever came from the Wicklow mines — that's what I would."

In proportion as the reasoning of poor Judy became unanswerable, awaking, as it did, the slumbering pride of Honor's ill-regulated mind, she grew angry. "It's no use talking, Judy," said she; "beggars can't be choosers. I've seen too much of the misery of poverty and dependence not to wish to secure riches by a good marriage."

"And small blame to you if you do it dacently, Miss Honor. But isn't it sinful — ay, be my soul, and ungrateful too — to say you have seen the misery of poverty and dependence, when I can take my oath you never have known either? Haven't you seen as much plinty in your mother's house as heart could wish; and, as for dependence, when did those who supplied the plinty ever make

her or you feel it? Oh! Miss Honor, the givers of plenty have a blessing in giving; and, if the receivers have right hearts, they have a blessing in receiving. To be the objects of such continual care, attention, and friendship must sure be a cause for happiness, and gratitude to God and man."

"But if I'd rather give than take, Judy, and if I long to be rich and able to pay back with interest all that our friends ever did for my mother and me, am I to be blamed?"

"Ah! Miss Honor, how can your spirit be so proud in some things, and so little so in others?"

"Have done, Judy, and don't bother me any more now. You'll be glad enough when you see me a fine lady, with carriages and horses, and servants and diamonds."

"Yes, Miss, that I will, provided you don't demean yourself to get them, and that you have a clean conscience and a firm mind to behave well to the gentleman who gives 'em, even though he is a Sassenach and an upstart."

The following day Honor O'Flaherty went to Miss White's, the milliner's, to make some trifling purchase. "Of course," said that gossiping person, "you have heard the news, Miss O'Flaherty?"

"What news?" inquired the latter.

"That Miss Fitzgerald is to be married to Sir Henry Travers."

"But are you quite sure?"

"Certain. I have received an order to send my best silks and various other things to Ballymacross Castle, and I've got a private note from Miss Fitzgerald's own maid to give me the news. This is no false intelligence, like what I heard yesterday, when — would you believe it, Miss O'Flaherty? — Captain Sitwell would insist that Sir Henry Travers had proposed for you, and said that Mr. Hunter, to whom you showed the letter, had told him so."

How did Honor's face flush when she heard this statement, and how did she mentally execrate Mr. Hunter for having betrayed that which she meant solely for his own ear. While Miss White, no less remarkable for her gossiping propensities than for her malevolence, told Honor of Captain Sitwell's story, she narrowly watched the countenance of Miss O'Flaherty, and, as she observed it turn crimson with anger and shame, she thought to herself, "I am now satisfied that the story was got up by Miss Honor herself for some purpose or other, and had not the slightest foundation. She refuse to be Lady Travers, indeed! Why, she'd jump for joy to have such a chance."

"I understand," resumed Miss White, "that the baronet is making a splendid settlement on his future bride, and is going to add many fine jewels to the family ones, which I've heard my mother say were splendid. Travers-hall is to be newly furnished, and an elegant carriage is ordered, with new liveries."

All these particulars were the fruit of the fertile brain

of Miss White, who, having no partiality to Miss O'Flaherty, took a pleasure in exciting her envy.

"Every one must admit," resumed she, "that the young ladies of Ballymacross Castle never make themselves cheap — never compromise their own respectability, nor that of their family, by husband-hunting."

How Honor would have liked to box her ears, feeling, as it was meant she should, the reproof to herself, conveyed in the praise bestowed on the Misses Fitzgerald.

"The ladies at Ballymacross Castle will be very much displeased by this foolish report of Sir Henry Travers' having proposed to you, Miss O'Flaherty," observed the spiteful old spinster, Miss White, "so I advise you to contradict it, for there are plenty of persons evil-disposed enough to say that it was you or some of your friends who circulated the falsehood; and, as the Fitzgerald family have ever been the kindest and most generous friends to your mother, it would be a pity that they should be turned against her."

Honor felt the sting intended for her, and writhed under it; but, mastering her anger, she assumed a careless air and said, "Well, Miss White, I authorize you to give the most positive contradiction to this stupid and absurd tale; for, as your shop is the news-office of the place, this will be as public a mode of doing so as if I employed the town-crier to announce it, and will save me the shilling to which he would be entitled for the performance

of his office;" and, nodding superciliously to the shopkeeper, Miss Honor left her.

"Oh the cockatrice, the serpent!" muttered Miss White. "Won't I pay her for this impudence? What a cut she gave me at last. I feel the wound festering at this moment, and won't have a happy minute till I have had my revenge. She's as bold as brass, that's what she is! Coming here, day after day, to fill up my shop to buy a yard of penny ribbon, a mere excuse to meet the officers; and there she'll stand for half an hour shaking her dark ringlets, flashing her eyes around, and showing those white teeth of hers (I hate such white teeth as hers), and taking up the whole attention of the officers, and preventing their looking at my goods and buying them. I can see as plainly as possible that she has designs on that rich booby, Hunter; but won't I spoil her plans the very first time he comes here alone? I'll let him into her real character, so I will; for it would be a sin to allow the poor young man to be made a fool of, and his poor parents to have the grief of seeing such a daughter-in-law in their elegant house, which I have heard is grander than a palace. I don't think that girl ever spent the value of two pounds in my shop since she has left off pinafores up to this hour. To be sure she has no money; but why should poor people who can't buy come and take up the place of the rich who can? And why should persons who haven't as many farthings as I have guineas pretend to be above me in the world? It's my opinion that those who are poor should not presume

to give cuts except to those who are still poorer than themselves, and should treat those who have a nice little fortune with proper respect though they may be shopkeepers."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HONOR O'FLAHERTY had only advanced a few steps from Miss White's shop, when she encountered Mr. Hunter. "Well, my fair Honor," said he, "I was going in search of you, and having some loose coin to throw away at that old cat, Miss White's shop, I want you to select something for me. I have observed the old girl always looks cross unless one lays out money with her. Come back and choose some trumpery for me?"

"Not I," replied Honor, *brusquely*; "I am in no humour for such nonsense. But let us walk to the waterside, for I want to speak to you without interruption."

The pair walked on rapidly, and almost in silence, until they left the streets behind them, and, when free from the fear of interruption, Honor stopped and, laying her hand on Hunter's arm, thus addressed him.

"I'll tell you what, James, the time is come when we must positively elope and get married. People are talking at every side of our meetings, our walks, and our attachment. I would not for the whole world have my character made the sport of idle tongues; and such will inevitably be the case if we do not at once put our intentions into execution."

"The colonel has applied for leave of absence for me, and I expect it from the Horse Guards by this night's post. I have got my next quarter's allowance, and if the leave comes I'll be ready to start to-morrow night."

"What am I to do for a maid, James?"

"Try to do without one until we are married."

"What, and travel with you alone? Not for all the world."

"Why, we shall be man and wife in two days, Honor, and then what need we care for what people may say? I had no notion you were so prudish, Honor."

"Prudish or not, I'll not go alone with you."

"Can it be possible that you are afraid to trust yourself alone with me?"

"Not a bit; for, if I thought you'd so much as kiss the tips of my fingers without my consent, I'd never marry you."

"Then why want a maid?"

"Because I fear the comments of evil tongues; and I must insist, James, on having a woman to sit in the same carriage with us until we are wedded."

"What a pleasant journey we are likely to have," observed Hunter, sulkily, "with a stupid brute of a lady's maid stuck between us, before whom one can't say a word."

"Why not? We can have nothing to say that need be kept a secret. The woman who is to accompany us will know, of course, that we are eloping to be married, therefore

we may talk about that without reserve, and a pleasant subject too, at least, according to my notion."

Hunter, nevertheless, did not appear convinced that a trio could be as pleasant as a *tête-à-tête*, and his clouded brow denoted his opinion.

"What a pity you don't speak French?" observed Honor.

"How should I have dreamed that I should ever require it?" was the reply.

"But where are we to find a maid? Let me reflect. I know a young mantuamaker, a decent woman, who, I dare say, would be glad to go with me."

"It has just occurred to me that my valet's wife would do better. She is a respectable woman, always accompanies her husband wherever I go, keeps my linen in order, and may prove a good servant to you."

"Yes, that will do famously. I'll have my clothes ready in a parcel to throw out of the window to your servant, so that when I leave the house I'll have nothing to encumber me. I do so hope that your leave of absence will come by this evening's post, and then we can start to-morrow night."

"I dare say it will."

"It's lucky you have a carriage of your own, and, if you take your own horses to the first post, there will be no one to tell who accompanied you, for you can tell your coachman when you get there that if he says anything you will discharge him. And now, one word more. Don't

go to Miss White's shop. I've a particular reason for this, which I'll tell you when we are on the road; and now good bye, my dear James."

"Can't you stay a little longer, Honor, I'am always so bored when I have no one to amuse me. I can no longer make the idle boys about the streets run races, swim, or box, as I used to do, the colonel having forbidden it, because their plaguy mothers make a fuss about their being made ill by it; and as you say I must not go to Miss White's shop to hear all the gossip, and our fellows in the regiment are always reading, drawing, or writing, and don't like being interrupted, I never know what to do with myself except to smoke, and too many cigars make me ill. I wish you 'd walk about with me as long as you can stay out, or let me go home with you for a couple of hours."

"It's out of the question, my mother is as cross as possible at your coming so often, and would make a piece of work if you came. Go home and see your things packed up, that will kill time; and remember you have only one day more to pass without having me always by your side to amuse you. We'll have rare fun, you may be sure, for you know how I can make you laugh."

"Yes, by Jove, no one ever made me laugh so much as you, my dear Honor; and I hope and trust, once we are married, I shan't be so dull and mopish as I am now. Whenever I see a wet day I fall into the blue devils, and I don't know what to do with myself. I look out of the window, see the drops of rain running down the panes of

glass, the waterspouts sending down showers on the dirty pavement, and the gutters stirred up by the heavy rain, presenting such a picture of filth and wretchedness that I turn from it with disgust, and feel fit to hang myself. Then I count the patterns on the paper on my room and on the carpet till my head feels giddy. I can find no one to play at cards or backgammon with me; I hate to smoke alone, and the day seems as if it would never pass away."

"Why don't you try to read. There are many books that might amuse you?"

"I have often taken up a book, but before I had read three pages it bored me so much that I have thrown it down. I have frequently wished to have a servant who could amuse me when I had no one else to do so; but it would be considered ungentlemanly in the regiment to associate with one's servant. I have also thought of learning to play the fiddle, but it would give me trouble, so I abandoned the project. Nothing is so tiresome as not knowing what to do with one's self, and having to look at one's watch every twenty minutes in the hope that at least double that time has passed. I dare say this never happened to you, Honor?"

"Never. I can hardly find time for half what I want to do."

"I have tried breakfasting *twice*, instead of once, to fill up the long day, and have had two luncheons, but they only made me ill and spoiled my appetite for dinner; so at last I said to myself there is nothing left for me but to marry some lively girl that will amuse me and keep the

blue devils away, and you came in my way, Honor, just in the nick of time. In England I could have gone a long time without thinking of marrying; for there's no quarters to which a regiment can be sent where one can't find two or three public billiard-rooms; and, if there is no one to play with, one can play with the marker. Then there are boxing-matches, cock-fighting, dog-fighting, rat-hunting, and various other amusements to kill time; but here there's nothing going on, and, as I find all my brother officers have taken to reading much more than when we were in England, there's no getting them to amuse me."

"Well, you'll soon be independent of them, that's one comfort," said Honor O'Flaherty.

Mr. Hunter drew out his watch, expressed his delight at finding it was an hour later than he had imagined, complimented his future bride on her power of making the time pass so much more rapidly than when he was alone; and she exhorting him again not to go to Miss White's shop, and to take a circuitous route back to the town, while she pursued the shortest one, they parted with expressions of impatience uttered by both for the arrival of the hour for their elopement.

"He is the greatest booby I ever met," thought Honor to herself as she retraced her steps towards home; "he doesn't care a straw for me, and, what is more, is such a goose as to let me see he only marries me to be amused. A nice compliment for a pretty girl, and one which I shan't forget when I am Mrs. James Hunter," thought Honor,

with bitterness of heart. "He 'll be a terrible bore for a companion, but that I must remedy as well as I can by always having plenty of young and pleasant officers to lunch with us every day, and to spend the evenings. I'll make his money fly, I can tell him. I 'll be the best-dressed woman wherever I go. I 'll have the nicest carriages, and deny myself nothing that strikes my fancy; so that I 'll make up to myself for having a stupid booby of a husband, who only marries me that I may amuse him. Oh! the fool — the fool!"

Mr. Hunter's leave of absence arrived as he expected, and he took means to apprize Honor O'Flaherty of the fact. She passed a considerable portion of the night in making her preparations for her intended flight; and, having concealed her packages in a small closet within her room, sat down to reflect on her projects. For the first time the thought of her mother's anger, grief, and shame when her elopement should be discovered, occurred to her; and some natural tears filled her eyes as she presented to herself her poor, weak-minded, and helpless parent left alone. But she wiped them soon, at the recollection that hereafter she would secure independence and comfort to the old lady; and that her neighbours and friends, she felt certain, would not forsake her in her affliction. "I am determined to save her from all blame in this affair," thought Honor, with more kindness of intention and forethought than often instigated her actions; and, drawing forth her writing implements, she wrote as follows: —

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,

"When you receive this letter I shall be far away, on my road to be married to Mr. Hunter. Don't be angry or sorry, for it's no manner of use, and be assured the step I am taking will be for your advantage as well as for mine. I dared not tell you what I was going to do, for I knew you would be angry and try to prevent me. Mr. Hunter felt sure his parents would not consent to his marrying a girl without a fortune, and, if they suspected his attachment to one so situated, would immediately take him away from this, so we determined to elope, get married in Scotland, then in England after, and, as he is an only child, his parents will soon forgive our runaway match and receive us kindly. Don't blame me too much; for, if it had not been for the reasons I have just given you, I would never have consented to go away, as I would have much preferred having a public and elegant wedding at home. But rich husbands are not to be easily had, and to secure one I have consented to elope. Don't think I go alone with Mr. Hunter. His servant's wife, a decent woman, will accompany us, and I have insisted that she is to sit between him and me in the carriage during the whole journey, and sleep in my room. The first thing I will do when I am married will be to send you a certificate and some money, and I will take care you shall have a liberal allowance regularly paid as long as you live, that will enable you to have every comfort. Judy knows nothing whatever of my elopement, and

never was in my confidence, so don't blame her. God bless you, my dearest mother. Forgive me for the pain I am inflicting on you at present, and believe me your affectionate daughter,

"HONOR O'FLAHERTY."

A tear fell on the paper as it occurred to the writer how many would dim the eyes of her poor mother when she perused it, and a relenting of the heart made her hand unsteady as she folded and sealed the epistle. But Honor's was not a mind to dwell long on painful reflections, and she summoned to her aid to banish them visions of future fortune and all the good that wealth can secure; and, to do her justice, the independence she should bestow on her mother, and the liberal gifts she would often send her, afforded the best consolation at this moment for the pangs of regret she for the first time experienced. "I never before thought I liked my poor mother so well," murmured she; "but I can't bear to think how many sad hours she will spend, how many bitter tears she will shed. I wish Judy could read, for I'd write her a letter to tell her that she must not neglect anything that can afford comfort or consolation to her mistress, and that I will reward her well for her care. Poor Judy, too! perhaps I may never see her again. How hurt she will be that her young mistress, of whom she was so proud, should take a step that will set all the neighbours talking. My native mountains, my bright river, that I've so often delighted to look upon as

it ran sparkling and bounding on its course, I feel a pang at leaving you too. But I must not think of all this, but turn my thoughts to when I can come back a rich lady, wearing the finest clothes, beautiful jewels, elegant laces, and with fine carriages, horses, and servants, and when the neighbours will say, 'Well, after all, Honor, though a wild girl, makes an excellent daughter.'"

"You're not well, darling," observed Mrs. O'Flaherty the next morning, as she and her daughter sate at breakfast, of which meal Honor scarcely tasted. Judy, Judy, come here!"

"Coming, Ma'am, coming, Ma'am," replied Judy, rushing in while tying on a white apron.

"I am sure, Judy, Miss Honor's not well. She can't eat a morsel of breakfast, and she looks as pale as if she hadn't had a wink of sleep the whole night. I have cut this nice thin slice of bread which you must toast for her Judy, and —"

"Indeed, dear mother, I could not touch it."

"Then tell me, darling, what's the matter with you? Have you a headache, a pain in your side, or in your chest?"

"No, indeed, mother. There is nothing at all the matter with me, but I feel I can't eat."

"Look at your young mistress, Judy, see how pale she is, how heavy her eyes look! Only I know that my dear Honor never cries, I'd think she has been shedding tears."

Judy glanced at her youthful mistress, and, like Mrs. O'Flaherty, was struck with her unusual paleness and languid eyes; but, unwilling to increase the anxiety of her doting mother, she said, "Is it Miss Honor shedding tears? faith she's not given to do that same any way, for she thinks it's enough to have one of the family crying half the long day."

But, though Judy said this, she nevertheless felt certain that Miss Honor *had* been weeping, and bitterly accused herself for being the cause. "I wish my tongue had been in my pocket," thought the faithful creature, "when I went to tell Miss Honor the spiteful remarks those *bastes* made on her whilst walking with the young officer. She has a proud spirit of her own, and a good right she has to it, considering the ould family and rich Milesian blood she comes from; and sure 't was enough to enrage and affront her to know that those who are not fit to tie her shoe should dare to take the liberty of speaking about her. And I to be such a good-for-nothing brute as to tell her! I deserve to be ducked under a pump, so I do, for my impudence in telling her such nonsense, but I declare to God above I meant it all for the best."

"Judy, have a nice little chicken roasted for my darling's luncheon," said the anxious mother, "and a nice laughing potato quite hot."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"And be sure, Judy, to have it on the table at one o'clock."

"To the minute, Ma'am."

Honor attempted to say she knew she could not eat, but the tenderness of her mother melted her, and she burst into tears.

"Oh! my own child, my precious Honor, tell me where you suffer. Let me send for the doctor, and let me entreat you to go to bed."

Honor saw that, unless she made an effort to master her feelings, her mother, believing her to be seriously ill, would not leave her for a minute, wiped her tears away, and, forcing a smile, assured her parent that she really felt not the slightest indisposition, but had merely a little nervousness, which would soon subside if left quiet.

The luncheon was served to her at one o'clock, and to please her mother she eat a few morsels much against her inclination. She remained at home the whole day seated in the window, and saw, as evening came on, Mr. Hunter approach it and drop a note on the window-sill. Her mother had left the room only two minutes before, so that Honor could raise the window, snatch the note, and devour its contents; which having done, she wrote two lines on the back of it to signify that when it was dusk she would let fall her packages into the street, and at twelve o'clock be ready to depart with her lover.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEVER, perhaps, had Mrs. O'Flaherty shown more tenderness towards her daughter than on the day that was to be the last of their sojourn under the same roof; for the tears shed by Honor — a rare occurrence with her, whose spirits were peculiarly buoyant — had awakened an unusual interest and anxiety in the fond mother's breast. The high spirits and constant gaiety of Honor had often hitherto checked the demonstrations of Mrs. O'Flaherty's overweening love. She was afraid of the loud laugh, or the oft-times-repeated phrase of "Mother, you want to fondle me as when I was a baby;" but to see Honor shed tears, and feel how warmly she returned her embraces, was something so new that, encouraged by these indications of affection, she indulged in all the overflowing fondness of maternal love, as much surprised as delighted to find it so graciously received. It required a great effort on Honor's part to conceal her emotion when, before retiring to her chamber at night, she, as usual, kissed her mother. She longed to throw herself on her knees and entreat her blessing; but she mastered her agitation, and left her parent wholly unsuspecting of its existence.

"I don't know how it is, Judy," observed Mrs. O'Flaherty, as her faithful attendant assisted to change her day-clothes for those of night; "but I have felt more like what I used to feel when my daughter was a little child, this

day, than I have for years; and she did not check me either, as she generally does, nor laugh at my doting tenderness. It seemed to me, Judy, as if she liked me better to-day than usual! If she behaved always to me in this gentle way, I 'd be too fond of her; and yet I hardly know in what the difference in her consisted. It was a thing to be *felt*, but not described, Judy, and made me feel as if I could hold her close to my breast and shed tears over her as I often did when she was a baby. Wasn't it strange, Judy, to see her shed tears?"

"Why, I must confess, Ma'am, Miss Honor's not much given to crying. She's more in the laughing line; but young ladies *will* be young ladies, they are just for all the world like an April sky, showers and sunshine. But you mustn't be thinking about her now, Ma'am, or you'll grow nervous and not be able to close your eyes for the night. I'll just run and make you a cup of gruel with a teaspoonful of whisky in it, and that will compose you nicely for a good night's rest."

"No, thank you, Judy, I'd rather not take anything. There are some thoughts that, though they are serious, one would not like to drive away, and I'll go to sleep remembering how fondly she returned my kiss to-day and to-night. The recollection does me good."

"Nothing will do you good that keeps you awake, Ma'am, so don't be obstinate," said Judy, making her exit to prepare the water-gruel, *malgré* all her mistress's repeated asseverations that she would rather not take any.

"God bless and protect my child this blessed night, and all others," prayed Mrs. O'Flaherty, aloud and with fervour. "May angels watch over her while she sleeps, and when I behold her to-morrow may the roses of health be restored to her cheeks and the lustre to her eyes."

Honor, who had opened the door of her chamber to listen whether Judy had been dismissed for the night, heard her mother's prayer, and her heart beat quick and tears filled her eyes as she listened to it. She felt tempted to enter her mother's room to embrace her once more, but the approaching steps of Judy warned her to retreat, and she remained listening nervously to every sound, fearful that it might occur to Judy to come to her room, a not unfrequent practice of hers whenever she had anything to communicate. The thought made her turn the key of her chamber. The partition which separated her mother's room from Honor's was so thin that every word uttered in either could be heard in the other, and Honor could distinctly hear Judy say "Here, Ma'am, is a nice cup of thin gruel for you."

"It smells strong, Judy, I'm sure you've put more than a teaspoonful of spirits in it, and that will give me a headache and make me ill."

"Is it me, Ma'am, that would give you anything to make you ill? Faith it's not myself that would. I know better than to give the least drop more than the teaspoon, and that same hardly full. Take it, Ma'am, if you please, I know if you don't you won't sleep to-night. See, Ma'am,

you've left half in the cup. Come, now, finish it, I won't let you alone till you do."

"Do you think, Judy, that my darling was unwell to-day?"

"Is it she, Ma'am? Not a bit. I never saw her better."

"But why did she look so pale, Judy?"

"Perhaps it was that she was wishing to have a new dress for the next ball, Ma'am; and little things like that often vexes a young lady, and makes her look pale, especially when she has no greater troubles to think of."

"Ah, Judy, if I had the means, my darling should be always the best dressed of all the young ladies; there's nothing I would deny her, for sure isn't she worthy of everything — so beautiful, so sprightly, and so elegant as she is?"

"Troth, Ma'am, it's true for you, she's all that, and more too, for to my taste she bates all the young ladies in the whole place. There's not one of 'em to be compared with her."

"Judy, you may take my black bombazine gown, it will make you a nice dress for Sundays."

"Thank you, Ma'am, but I'd rather not at present."

"Why so, Judy?"

"Because it would look as if I only praised Miss Honor to get a present; when God, who sees my heart, knows that I think every word, ay, and much more into the bargain, than ever I said."

"I am sure you do, Judy; and I'm not the one to suspect

you of flattery when you speak of my child; for in my eyes, Judy, she has no fault; she's only too b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l and too g-o-o-d;" and the doting mother dissolved into a flood of tenderness.

"There now, if you arn't crying, and all for nothing at all," said Judy. "Sure it's a sin and a shame for you to be making yourself ill, just because God has given you a beautiful and elegant young lady for a daughter."

"It's because I feel His goodness and her goodness, may the Almighty bless her."

"Amen," said Judy.

"She doesn't know, Judy, how I dote on her, or how often I pray for her. Sure she's all my comfort, all my hope in life, and she's the image of her poor dear father;" and here a fresh burst of tears interrupted the mother's words.

"Now, Ma'am, I won't stay a minute longer; for once you begin to cry it's not aisy to stop you;" and Judy drew the bed curtains close, and withdrew, wishing her sobbing mistress "Good night and happy dreams." She stole with noiseless steps to Honor's door and tried to enter, but, finding it locked, muttered to herself, "I wanted just to ask her pardon for vexing her by repeating the gossip of them bastes, but it will do as well to-morrow, for she's not one to lie down in anger, though I'm sure her paleness and her tears were all because of what I tould her. Botheration to me for a fool as I was, and bad luck to them spiteful, envious bastes that put it into my head;" and off went

Judy to her attic to sleep away the fatigue and cares of the day.

"Poor Judy!" thought Honor. "She, too, loves me! Oh my poor dear mother! How every word she uttered touched my heart! And I am leaving her without saying farewell! without imploring her blessing! How hard-hearted — how ungrateful she will think me; and yet I never loved her so well as at this moment. And to leave her for one who loves me not — who is incapable of loving — who only marries me to be amused! But I must not think. It is now too late. I must only remember that I will be rich; and that I will have gold, though not love, by my marriage. Yes, mother, with all my faults — and I was never so sensible of them as at this moment — you shall find that your poor Honor will not forget nor neglect you!"

A slight tap beneath the window warned Honor that the moment of departure was come. She gently raised the casement, and beheld Hunter, a woman, and a man (whom she justly concluded was his servant) standing close to the house. She threw out her packages, which were caught by the domestics; and then, putting on her cloak and bonnet, stealthily opened her door. She paused for a moment at that of her mother's chamber, and, by the sound of her heavy breathing, ascertained that she already slept; then, descending the stairs, she let herself out so noiselessly that she could not be heard and gently closing the door after her, in the next moment felt her hand grasped in that of Hunter.

"All is ready," said he. "But you weep, Honor! Why these tears?"

"Don't speak to me now, James. In a few minutes I shall be better."

Hunter drew her arm within his, and, as he felt it tremble, a sentiment more like affection that he had ever previously entertained for his future bride passed through his breast. "Poor thing!" thought he to himself, "she must have a good heart too, to weep for leaving such a dull woman as her mother, and such a disagreeable home."

In a few minutes they reached the spot where Hunter's carriage was waiting, his horses pawing the ground in their impatience to advance; the step was let down, Honor handed in, her packages were placed in a large trunk fitted on behind, and Hunter was preparing to enter the carriage, when she reminded him that the woman, who was in the act of ascending the dickey, must take her place within. Hunter angrily told her to enter, and then, following her, the door was closed; his servant mounted the box, and, the words "All right" being uttered, the horses bounded on rapidly, and Honor lent back, and wept in silence for some time. "Come, come, dear Honor, don't give way to low spirits. It's no use, and will put me into the blue devils. We can come back and see your mother whenever you like after we are married. Don't take up more room than you can, Mrs. Simkins, for the carriage was built to hold only two, but this lady wished to have you inside instead of on the box. Suppose you take off your cloak,

Mrs. Simkins, for it fills up room, and I can throw it out of the window for your husband to take charge of."

The order was promptly obeyed.

"Ay, that's something better, but it's a horrid bore to have three persons in a carriage built only to hold two. How are you now, my dear Honor? Would you like to have another cushion at your back? Place this cushion behind the young lady, Mrs. Simkins. Are your feet cold, dear Honor? If they are Mrs. Simkins can sit at the bottom of the carriage and lay them on her lap and rub them."

Mrs. Simkins immediately moved to fulfil this offer, but Honor prevented her, by assuring her admirer that she did not in the least suffer from the cold.

"Do you find the carriage easy, my dear Honor? It was built by Barker, the best coachmaker in London. I always have everything from the tiptop people, for I think it's no pleasure to have things if they are not the best that can be had. Don't you agree with me? Shall you mind crossing the sea? I hope you won't be sick. It's a devilish bore to be seasick or see any one so. Don't touch me if you can help it, Mrs. Simkins, for I hate being touched, except by — I won't say who, but you may guess, Honor."

To every word Mr. Hunter addressed to Mrs. Simkins her answer was, "Yes, please Sir," or "Whatever you wish, Sir."

"Hang me, Mrs. Simkins, if I don't think you have some lavender-water about you."

"Yes, please Sir. I have a smelling-bottle with some, for I thought the young lady might, perhaps, want one, and so I put one into my pocket, Sir."

"Fancy, my dear Honor, our being infected with lavender-water?"

"Very sorry, Sir; beg your pardon, Sir."

"Just take it from your pocket and throw it out of the window."

"I beg pardon, Sir, but if you would please to let me give it to my husband, for I wouldn't like to lose it, as it was given me by my mother."

Honor instantly felt a good will towards the woman who valued the gift of her mother, and interfered to save the smelling-bottle.

"But, I assure you, I can't stand the smell of lavender-water," said Hunter, "it's so vulgar; no one uses it but servants going to a dance; and, if Mrs. Simkins gives it to her husband to keep, he'll smell of it, and as he comes near me when I am undressing I shall be incommoded."

"If you please, Sir, the coachman could put it in his pocket for me," said Mrs. Simkins timidly.

"I'd much rather you threw it away altogether, and I will give you money to buy a new one."

"James, how can you? I will not have Mrs. Simkins lose the bottle given her by her mother," observed Honor impatiently, shocked and disgusted by every fresh proof of the selfishness of her future husband.

"Can't your mother give you another smelling-bottle?"

inquired Hunter, addressing himself to the discomfited Mrs. Simkins.

"If you please, Sir, she 's dead," was the reply; and the frequent application of her handkerchief to her eyes for a few minutes after, with the sound of suppressed sobs, revealed that the poor woman was weeping.

Honor kindly pressed her hand, and Mrs. Simkins gratefully answered, "Thank you, Miss, thank you."

"Well, I wonder how any one can care a pin about what a mother gives one," remarked Hunter. "I'm sure, I don't, for, though my mother has given me heaps of presents, I never keep them. Old women never have any taste; they always buy a pack of trumpery not worth having; and, except the diamond studs and sleeve-buttons my mother gave me my last but one birthday, I have retained none of her gifts. I always say to her, 'Buy nothing for me, old girl, but give me in cash whatever you intended to lay out in a present, and then I can exercise my own taste.' The old lady gets offended, but she knows it 's no use being cross with me, so she gave me, my last birthday, the £ 200 she meant to spend on a present, and I bought with it a devilish fine high-stepping horse. You 'll have rare fun, Honor, when you see my mother and me together. The old girl thinks that I am the pink of perfection, and would kiss me fifty times a day if I 'd let her; but I say, 'Nix, Mynheer, two kisses a day are as much as I can spare, and if more are wanted they must be well paid for.' That 's my way of managing her, as you 'll find."

A deep sigh from Mrs. Simkins revealed her disapprobation of the hardness of heart of her husband's master, and Honor thought better of her for it. At the first post the horses were changed; the coachman was dismissed back to the regiment, warned to say nothing of any one's accompanying his master, on penalty of being discharged; and, with four post horses, the carriage was whirled rapidly along, Hunter having promised a liberal remuneration to the postillions if they would advance at full speed. The velocity of the movement induced the travellers to sleep; but Honor was frequently awoke by the reproaches of Hunter accusing Mrs. Simkins of having interrupted his slumbers by touching him with her elbow or shoulder, the poor woman humbly entreating pardon and expressing her regret.

"You may lean on my shoulder," whispered Honor, "I shan't at all mind it."

"Thank you, Miss, I am very much obliged to you, but it would be too great a liberty, I dare not."

"I insist," said Honor; and, when they were awoke by changing horses at the next post, Hunter remarked that he had enjoyed a very comfortable sleep owing to Mrs. Simkins not having once touched him during the last twelve miles, which proved she might avoid it when she paid attention.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE reserve of Honor O'Flaherty during the route conciliated the respect of her humble companion, Mrs. Simkin. Honor, to the great horror of Mr. Hunter, insisted that she should be present at the repasts, and never allowed herself to be separated from her day or night. The journey and voyage were accomplished in as short a time as was possible, the marriage duly solemnized at Gretna-green, after which an announcement of the fact was forwarded to several of the London papers, and a letter was addressed to his father and mother, by Mr. Hunter, stating the fact of his nuptials. "My wife," wrote he, "is of one of the best families in Ireland, and, though she has no fortune, has refused a baronet with ten thousand a year, for my sake. I 'd have asked your consent before I proposed, only I knew you would not give it, and I thought you 'd be more angry if I married after you had warned me not. The job is done. I am fairly married. I like my wife better than I ever did any one before; so it's no use being cross about it now, when it can't be undone. We shall start for England in an hour, and go direct to London, to the Clarendon, where, if you like to write to us to go to you, we will: but mind, no long lectures when we come. A good hearty kiss from my mother, and a hearty shake hands from you, father, and all will be well and right, with the addition of a pretty lively daughter-in-law for you both, that will make the great house gayer than it ever has been."

When Hunter had finished this uncereemonious epistle, and handed it to his bride to read, she thought it so very free and easy that she wished him to write a more respectful one.

"No, no, Honor," observed he, "I know the old folk, and you don't, and I am well enough acquainted with their ways to be quite sure that if I wrote an humble apology to them they would mount the high horse, and not receive us for two or three months, which would not be pleasant, as I shall be wanting money for a thousand things. We mustn't make ourselves too cheap, or they'll be for acting the grand; but we must behave as if we thought no blame could be found, and that what we have done was quite right and natural. All the governor's fortune is entailed on me, and even if he were to refuse to receive us, and hold out in dudgeon, the Jews would advance me on post obits as much money as I may want. Therefore, mind, Honor, you don't knock under to either the governor or the old girl. Keep your own with them from the first, and all will go well."

While Hunter was writing to his parents Honor wrote a very affectionate letter to her mother, informing her of her marriage, and once more soliciting her pardon for having eloped. She enclosed the certificate of her marriage, gave some civil message from her husband, and held out the hope of soon going to Ireland to see her mother. Nor was the faithful Judy forgotten, for a kind remembrance to her was

appended in the form of a postscript, with a reminder to take especial care of her mistress.

And now, by less rapid travelling, the bride, bridegroom, and "suite" (as the Scots paper announced it) proceeded towards England. Scotland once left behind, the high cultivation, the appearance of comfort and cleanliness, which met her eyes as they progressed, attracted all the bride's attention. The richly-wooded parks, and the noble herds of deer which roamed through them, the palatial mansions and picturesque castles beheld from the road, with the neat cottages and smiling gardens that fronted them by the side of it, delighted her; but a sigh agitated her heart as she contrasted these scenes of grandeur and the lowly ones of comfort, and compared them with her own less happy land, poor Ireland, with its stately dwellings deserted by the absent nobility, her gentry too embarrassed to preserve the air of good order which in every part of England pervades the abodes of the same class, and the wretched huts of the poor presenting a less comfortable aspect than the out-offices assigned to the cows and pigs of the English labourer. "My poor, poor country," thought Honor, "when will you shake off the misery, the poverty, in which you so long have been steeped? When will you cease to be the poor, the neglected, the despised, and importunate relation of this rich, this luxurious land?"

Never previously had Honor bestowed a serious thought on the unhappy state of her native country. Accustomed to its poverty and want of civilization, the external marks

of which were continually before her, her eyes had grown used to them; and it was only now when, for the first time, she beheld England — proud and happy England — that the contrast struck her so forcibly, that she learned to pity her own unhappy land. “Why, the very animals here are better off than the poor classes of human beings are with us,” thought she. “No wonder those proud Englishmen despise and mock us; and yet in what are we inferior to them? Are our men less brave, our women less virtuous?”

“This is something like a country, Honor, isn’t it?” observed Hunter, as he noticed how earnestly she gazed on the scenery around her. “You must allow this is different from Ireland? My own country never struck me before to be so beautiful, because I had not seen yours. Now it looks like a rich garden, everything fresh and blooming. Here we see no dirty beggars, in squalid rags, whining for relief; no half-naked children screaming for food, to disgust one and spoil the landscape.”

“I see it all, I feel it, James; but if you wish to make me a happy woman, a good wife, never taunt me about the poverty and misery of poor Ireland. I couldn’t bear it; it gives me a choking feel, James; so don’t let us speak of it.”

The comfort, the cleanliness, of the English inns too, struck Honor with amazement; but the more ready was she to admit their advantages the more did the contrast they offered to those in Ireland, so lately seen, mortify and shock her; and she never felt herself so thoroughly an Irish-

woman as now, when reminded by everything around her of the vast superiority, the effect only of civilization, of one country over the other. .

"With our grand mountains, our green hills, our clear and broad rivers, and our mild climate," thought Honor, "what might not Ireland become if the same advantages were given to her that are lavished on England!"

"Why, what the deuce are you thinking of, Honor?" said Hunter. "You seem to have left all your gaiety and high spirits behind you in the Emerald Isle, and have reserved no portion of them to enliven your poor husband, who is terribly menaced by an attack of the blue devils. It will be too bad if they seize on you, Honor, whom I thought capable of chasing away a whole regiment of them, and on whose aid to drive them from me I fully relied."

Honor smiled, but the smile was a faint one. She had become an altered woman; for reflection — only a recent guest, and introduced by new-born thoughts — had vanquished the levity and giddiness hitherto the leading features in her character; and, surprised by the change in her own mind, she found a charm in brooding over its newly-awakened powers. In the reflections that now occupied her she forgot the vain and empty pleasures, the anticipation of which had tempted her to achieve a marriage with Hunter by means so unworthy that she blushed at the recollection. She had condescended to flatter a man of low intellect and uncultivated mind in order to obtain riches, the value of which, now that she had en-

sured a right to their possession, no longer offered the same temptation as before. A sentiment of shame, as new as it was painful, oppressed her. As the folly and utter selfishness of her husband became more revealed to her by every observation he uttered, her sense of shame and self-reproach increased, that for such a man, or rather for his wealth, she could have humiliated herself to accomplish a marriage which she knew he really did not form from affection, but solely as a defence from *ennui*. These reflections absorbed the new-made wife, and precluded an attempt, even had the desire existed, to amuse her husband. And he, tired of his own thoughts, or more probably the absence of all thought, as well as offended by Honor's silence and grave countenance, resigned himself to slumber, or indulged in cigar after cigar, after having offered his companion one of these delectable little instruments said by the dull to produce Lethean forgetfulness, and by the man of genius to assist cogitation.

Although the disgusting odour was odious to her, and that she turned with loathing from the noisome vapour that filled the carriage, infecting her clothes, and even her hair, she made it a case of conscience to make no complaint; for had she not often in Ireland, when seeking to secure Hunter's hand, allowed him to believe that she would make no objection to this, his favourite recreation? and therefore, however or whatever she now suffered, she would not deprive him of this pleasure, though a faintness came over her several times never previously experienced.

Once she let down the glass, to breathe the fresh air; but the movement awoke her slumbering companion, who instantly requested her to draw up the glass, alleging that he always took cold if either of the windows were open. At the inns where the travellers stopped to dine, Hunter did ample justice to the repasts, while pronouncing them to be utterly unworthy of his approbation, and washed them down with such copious draughts of wine that the sudden but brief elevation of spirits which ensued was sure to be followed by a lethargic slumber on a sofa or chair, the soundness of which was evidenced by certain nasal sounds, loud enough to be heard in the adjoining rooms and passages. Honor would on these occasions employ Mrs. Simkins to procure her the loan of a book from the mistresses of the inns to pass away the weary hours, and for the first time began to find that reading was a great resource from painful thoughts or *ennui*. "I wish," would she say to herself, "I could give *him* this resource, but I fear it is hopeless to make the attempt."

"My wife is not at all the pleasant companion I expected," thought Hunter; "but I must say she is devilish good-natured, and lets me do as I like; and how few brides would do this! I can't think what has changed her so much since she left her home, where she used be as gay as a lark, and as playful as a squirrel. I suppose travelling doesn't agree with her, which I regret, as I like moving about; but she'll get used to it in time."

Long and tedious to Honor was the journey to London,

and heartily did she rejoice when it was over. Established in one of the best suites of rooms in the Clarendon, and surrounded by every comfort and luxury that wealth can command, she hoped to recover from the fatigue of travelling, and the deleterious effect of the tobacco smoke, from which her health had really suffered. But the morning following their arrival two letters were received by Hunter from his parents, which destroyed the hope of his wife of enjoying a few days' repose, of which she stood so much in need, as they announced the intention on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, senior, of arriving in London the next day. Hunter perused the letters, and then threw them on the table to Honor. "I thought," said he, "the governor and the old girl wouldn't hold out long against us. I wish they hadn't given in for a week or so, that we might have enjoyed our liberty in London instead of being dragged down to Wintern Abbey, or Westminster Abbey, as I sometimes call it, on account of its being so dull." The contents of the paternal and maternal letters were as follows:—

"James, — Knowing as you did my objection to early marriages, contracted when a young fellow cannot know his own mind, and has not experience to guide his choice, I think I had reason to be both surprised and vexed when I heard of your ill-advised marriage, and to a person, too, whom you acknowledge has no fortune. You have proved yourself totally wanting in prudence, and will, probably, have ample cause to repent your folly ere long. As what you have done cannot be undone, we must make the best of it, however angry we feel; and, to give your runaway marriage an appearance of respectability, we will come up to town, have you decently remarried in our presence, to show that we sanction it, and then bring you and your wife down here. I could more readily forgive you for marrying a woman of any other country, than Ireland, always

excepting France; but, as it can't now be helped, it's no use thinking of it; and so I remain, your disappointed but affectionate father,

"JAMES HUNTER."

Honor's cheek grew red as she perused the illiberal reflection on her country, but she made no remark, and, laying the letter quietly down, took up the maternal one: —

"James," wrote Mrs. Hunter, "you have pretty nigh broken my heart. To go and marry God knows who, without leave or licence; an H Irish girl, too, and most likely a Papist. Oh! James, what could you be thinking of? I hoped you would marry some helegant young lady of title that would be an onor to the family, and who would bring at least enough fortin to pay her way, instead of which you ran away with one of the wild H Irish, a set of people I never could abide, and you make me miserable. But mind one thing, James — though we forgive you now, because it is our duty as Christins. We never will have O'Connell, nor any of his tail, coming to our house to keep up a hagitation in our house and to hatch another Popish plot to burn us all in our beds. I'm afraid your wife can be no better than she should be, to run off with you in the way she has done, for no well-behaved young lady would consent to helope. I dare say, if the truth was known, it wasn't so much your fault, my poor boy; but those wild H Irish women are capable of carrying hoff any man. Hadn't I an H Irish woman in my kitchen once, and don't I know what they are like? I send you a cheque for a couple of hundred pounds, that you may buy your wife some decent clothes before your father sees her, and try to keep up the respectability of the family. Have her well dressed without a moment's delay, for I wouldn't on any account have our servants see her in her H Irish houtlandish fashions. I hope, my poor boy, you haven't caught cold running a wild-geese chase to Scotland. If you have I never will forgive this H Irishwoman. So no more at present from your unappy but affecte mother,

"SARAH HUNTER."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN poor Mrs. O'Flaherty descended to breakfast the morning after her daughter's departure, great was her surprise, and greater still her alarm, when she found that Honor had not made her appearance.

"Have you been to her room, Judy?"

"Faith and I have, Ma'am, twice, and I knocked and knocked, but, as no one said come in, I thought Miss Honor might not have slept well in the night, and was now making up for it."

"Go, Judy, go to her room; be sure you make no noise, but just peep through the opening of the curtains and see how my darling is."

Judy ascended the stairs, remained absent only a minute, and then returned as pale as death, her eyelids distended, and her frame trembling.

"What's the matter, Judy? What makes you tremble and look so pale?" inquired the anxious mother, now become more pale and terrified than her servant.

"What's the matter?" reiterated Judy. "Sure, how do I know what's the matter? All I do know is, that Miss Honor is not in her room, has not slept in her bed, which is just as I left it last night when I turned down the sheet."

"My child! my poor child!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Flaherty, sinking into a chair and fainting.

"Oh, botheration, isn't it enough to dhrive any one on earth slap out of their senses, if they had fourteen instead of seven," said Judy, bursting into a passion of tears. "The daughter gone off, God alone knows where; and the mother, God be good to the poor demented crater, fainting away as dead as a herring! What on earth will I do to get her out of this fit?" And Judy ran away to get feathers to burn under the nose of her mistress, which having done, she rubbed her hands and sprinkled her face with water. "Murder! murder!" cried Judy, the tears running down her face, "did any one ever see such a strong weakness? Ma'am, Ma'am, come to yourself a bit! just open your eyes. She doesn't move, she doesn't hear me — it's all up with her. Oh, Wirristhren, this is a sorrowful day!"

Judy put her hand to her brow for a moment, and then rushed off, returning with incredible speed with a bottle of whisky in her hand, and, dropping a little of it into a cup, she seized a spoon, and, forcing the clenched teeth of her mistress open, she poured a portion of the spirit down her throat. "If anything will bring her to herself it will be this," said Judy, "for I never knew it to fail with gentle or simple."

Her prediction was verified: the unhappy mother, half-suffocated, was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and suspended animation was restored. It was several minutes, however, before she could speak; but, when able to utter a word, she demanded to be supported to her daughter's room, nor could all the entreaties of Judy avail to change

her determination, though hardly able, even with her aid, to carry it into execution. With slow and trembling steps she ascended the stairs and entered the chamber; but the sight of the empty bed, which had not been pressed, and the cold and dreary aspect of the deserted room, appealed so strongly to her feelings that a violent flood of tears relieved her heart from the oppressive load of grief that lay like a weight of lead on it, and she wept long and silently. She then looked around, and saw on the table a letter directed to herself. With trembling hands she tore open the cover, and Judy rushed down to the sitting-room for her mistress's spectacles, little less anxious to know the contents of the letter than her to whom it was addressed.

"Oh, Judy, Judy," sobbed the unhappy mother, after reading the letter, "she loved me better than I thought; I can't be angry with her, try all that I can, for there is too much love for her in my heart to leave any room for anger." Again and again the letter was read over, and many were the tears that fell on it. "I was too proud of her," sobbed Mrs. O'Flaherty, "and God has punished me by humbling me in the only thing of which I was vain."

"Arragh, don't kill yourself with grief, misthis mavourneen. Sure, though she is gone, and without leave or licence, which is a pity, she'll be sure to come back a married lady, rich and grand, and then you'll forget this throuble, and be happier than ever you were before, to see her settled in life, and in grandeur."

"But, to elope, Judy, to go off alone, without so much

as a decent honest woman to keep her in countenance. Oh! Judy, I'm ashamed of her, and the hot blush of shame goes up to my forehead. No one but a mother can know what it is to have to blush for a daughter's shame!"

"But it will be all over when she is married, and people will forget it. Sure, if one gets safely into a church, no one will care whether she got in through the door or the window."

"Yes, Judy, every one will think the worse of her, and the parents of her husband can never have any esteem for her."

"Is it them? faith she'll teach 'em better; for Miss Honor isn't one to allow people to trate her with disrespect. You'll see she'll soon get the whip-hand of her people in law, as she did with us, Ma'am, and have everything all her own way."

"But the neighbours, Judy, all the people in the town, and Lady Fitzgerald and her daughters, and the Countess O'Neill and Miss Grace. Oh! Judy, what will they say, what will they think, and how shall I ever look in their face again?" And then poor Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears fell afresh.

"Those that you value won't turn their backs on you, Ma'am, I'll be bound, but be as kind and friendly as ever, and maybe more so, when they see you left alone."

This last sentence was an ill-chosen one, and renewed the tears of the deserted mother. "Alone! alone!" repeated

she, "that 's it, Judy, true for you, I 'm left alone sure enough;" and she sobbed in agony.

"It will only be for a short time, Ma'am, you may be sure; for Miss Honor will be soon back, covered with the finest silks, satins, and laces, and with diamonds that will beat out hollow all that was ever seen in Ireland except the Lady Lieutenant's."

"Oh! Judy, if her father, God rest his soul in heaven, was alive, what would he say, what would he do? He 'd blame me for all this; for he had a way of blaming me for everything, and would pull the house about my ears. It frightens me, Judy, to think what he would do."

"What a mercy it is, Ma'am, that he 's gone to heaven, and that you are safe from his anger."

"Don't say such a thing, Judy, don't say such a thing; wouldn't I put up with all his rage and bad usage to have him alive again; and haven't I been crying night and day ever since I lost him?"

"True for you, Ma'am, and, by what you have told me, you cried night and day while you had him, he used to bother and bate you so; so you see, Ma'am, whether you cried because he never let you alone, or have cried because he wasn't alive to torment you, it comes much to the same thing; only, for my part, I think it 's better to have to cry because a husband is dead, than because he is alive to break one's heart."

"Judy, you don't know what it is to be a wife;" and again Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears were renewed.

"Thanks be to God for that same, Ma'am," replied Judy; "but now, Ma'am, come down and have a bit of breakfast; a cup of tea will do you good."

"Don't talk to me of eating, Judy."

"Well, Ma'am, perhaps a drop of dhrink would do you more good?"

"I can neither eat nor drink."

"Then that 's wrong, Ma'am, and sinful too. You want strength to bear your troubles, and how can you have it if you starve yourself? I'll be bound Miss Honor has had a good breakfast before this, and why shouldn't you?"

This last argument seemed to produce some effect on Mrs. O'Flaherty, for she allowed herself to be led down stairs by Judy, and consented to partake of a very small portion of the breakfast provided for her.

"I'm sure, Judy, 't was the thought of going away that made my darling look so pale yesterday. Do you remember that she shed tears? And she showed more love to me, Judy, than usual."

All reminiscences of her daughter (and they were numerous) brought tears to the eyes of the poor mother.

"I'll let her cry her fill," said Judy to herself, "'t will ease her poor heart, and, as she 's used to crying, it won't hurt her so much as it might other people. I must prepare to meet inquisitive people who will be throwing themselves in my way to ask questions. How I'd like to blow 'em up instead of gratifying their curiosity. I'll let

no one in to the misthis unless it be some of her real friends, who come to comfort and not to bother her, poor old lady; and I'll get a nice little bit of dinner for her, and make her eat it, ay, and make her drink a glass of wine after. I'm vexed downright to think of how pleased that sarpent Biddy White will be when she hears the news, and how she'll go on *belouring** it to every one that goes into her shop. Many a shilling's worth she'll sell on the strength of giving the particklars, the old chate, when she knows not half so much as I do, and that's little enough. But I'll pretend to know everything, and that will make the runaway appear more respectable. I'll shake my head and look wise, and give a half smile, and say my young lady will come back a richer lady than any in the county. I'm only a poor servant, so 't will do me no harm to pretend to know more than I do; but it's better that the misthis should let all the world know that *she* was not in the secret, that spiteful people shouldn't be able to say she encouraged the elopement."

Such were the reflections of Judy while doing all in her power to comfort her mistress, — one of the methods adopted, and in which she had most faith, being the presenting various little dainties to tempt her appetite, and relating to her all the gossip she had heard during the last ten days. She felt surprised, but pleased, that no visitors came that day — "a sure sign, thought Judy, that nothing

* Publishing it, making it known.

is yet known, so we have a clear day before us." In the evening, however, Patrick O'Donohough brought some fruit from the Countess O'Neill, with her compliments to know how the ladies did. Judy narrowly scrutinized his countenance when he delivered the message, to ascertain whether he was still ignorant of the recent event in the family; but the calmness of its expression, and the unconcernedness of his manner, convinced her he was. She had been longing to make the Countess O'Neill acquainted with the event, for she well knew that from that lady and her amiable granddaughter her poor mistress would meet with ready sympathy and kindness in her troubles; but not knowing how to write, and not wishing to leave her mistress alone in the house, she had no means of making known to the countess the state of affairs. This now presented itself through the medium of Mr. Patrick O'Donohough, well known for his tact and discretion, and Judy determined to avail herself of it. She related to him all that she knew, and all that she surmised, not without tears that her young lady should have condescended to elope with any man, were he even a king, let alone an officer, who, though by all accounts as rich as the Bank of Ireland, ought to be too proud and honoured to beg the hand of Miss O'Flaherty, without carrying her off as if he was afraid his family would not consent to his marrying her openly in the presence of all the grandees in the neighbourhood, with Miss O'Neill and the young ladies from Ballymacross Castle for bridesmaids

The worthy Patrick was surprised and grieved at the intelligence. "It was a pity," he said, "that young ladies, and particularly those of the real old Milesian blood, hadn't a greater respect for themselves than to take such foolish steps; but it couldn't be helped, and all that remained was to make the best of it. He hoped there would be no delay to the marriage; *that* was now the first thing to be thought of."

"Troth, Mr. Patrick, Miss Honor's not the one to allow of any delay. Once she had committed the fault of going off I am sure that Miss Honor wouldn't let any man put off marrying her; no, not for half an hour. I've known her since she first opened her eyes in this sinful world, Mr. Patrick," continued Judy; "and, though she may be giddy, and too much given to walk about and flirt with the redcoats, only let one of them offer the least affront, or attempt so much as to kiss the tips of her fingers, and I'll go bail Miss Honor would bring him to his senses, and have him on his knees to ask her pardon before five minutes were over."

Patrick's only observation was, that it would be better for young ladies never to give gentlemen an opportunity of affronting them.

"You'll tell the countess of our troubles, Mr. Patrick, and then I'm sure she'll do or say something to comfort the poor old misthis, who his half demented."

"Certainly, Mrs. Judy, and now will you just step up

with the fruit and give the countess's compliments, and I'll wait until your return."

The sight of the fruit and the delivery of the message produced new tears from her for whom they were brought.

"Did Mr. Patrick himself bring them, Judy?" inquired she.

"Indeed, Ma'am, he did, and wouldn't go away until he heard how you were, Ma'am, and whether you had any message for the countess."

"Tell him, Judy, what has happened, and let him give my compliments to the countess and Miss O'Neill, for I'm not able to write, my hand shakes so terribly, and bid him tell them that I hope they won't think too hardly of my poor misguided child, who left a very affectionate letter behind her for me, and that I trust they will come and see me as soon as convenient."

Within a little more than an hour from the receipt of this message the Countess O'Neill was seated by the disconsolate mother, saying all that her good nature could suggest to console and comfort her; nor would she leave her until Mrs. O'Flaherty consented to accompany her home, and take up her abode with her for the present, accompanied by the faithful Judy.

"Why should I throw a gloom over your dwelling, my kind friend," said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "No, leave me here to weep alone."

"A few days will, I trust in God, bring you good tidings

of Honor, and when her marriage is announced, and your mind more at rest, you can return to your home."

The helpless poor woman removed to the Countess O'Neill's, where Grace, ever kind and amiable, joined with her mother in soothing their unhappy guest.

"It was to be, Judy," said Mrs. O'Flaherty that night as her servant assisted to undress her. "Didn't I see a ring in the candle very often lately, and didn't sparks fly out of the fire, which always denotes money; and, if the young officer is so rich as people say, money will, I dare say, come to our house."

"Let Miss Honor alone for thinking of you, Ma'am. I'll be bound she'll take good care you don't want for anything that she can give you."

"Ah, poor darling! perhaps the sea is between her and me this moment, Judy — the wide, wide sea." And tears rolled down Mrs. O'Flaherty's pale face. "Every time this evening that I looked in Miss O'Neill's face, Judy, my heart felt ready to break. There she was by her grandmother's side, where a good and dutiful daughter ought to be — so mild, so gentle, so fond, while my poor Honor was flying with a stranger, a man she didn't know a short time since, and leaving her poor mother to bear alone the shame and scandal of her conduct. Oh! what would her poor father say if he was alive? I tremble to think of it."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE precautions taken by Mr. James Hunter to prevent the elopement being known in — succeeded very well for the two days following it — so well that to even Miss White, the milliner — so celebrated for the speedy acquisition of news, and, above all, scandalous news, and for the active dissemination of it — it was still a secret. She had, it is true, heard that Mr. Hunter had gone on leave of absence, which, if she regretted it on account of the loss of the money he was in the daily habit of fooling away in her shop, she was in part consoled for by the mortification and disappointment his departure would occasion Honor O'Flaherty. "Well, *she's* disappointed, however," said the spiteful spinster to one of her cronies; "and all her *tête-à-tête* walks by the river-side have produced no effect, except to get her talked of for her want of decorum in taking them. I hate such bold and masculine girls, and am glad when their schemes to catch a husband fail."

"You shouldn't be too hard upon the poor girls," was the reply; "for they couldn't run about with young men as they do if their parents didn't let them. Whenever I see a foolish young creature allowed by her mother to go gadding about in search of a husband, it reminds me of our poor people turning out their cows and their pigs from their own field to wander in those of their neighbours in search of food, a line of conduct which they term 'turning out the poor bastes to gain their own livelihood.'"

The secret, so well kept for two days, ceased to be one on the third; for an inhabitant of — encountered Mr. Hunter's carriage on the road, and recognised in it Honor O'Flaherty. The news he related spread like wildfire through the town and neighbourhood. It was, to use Judy's words, "in every one's mouth." Many blamed, but few pitied, the poor mother, though most, if not all, pronounced her to be so weak and foolish a person as to be utterly incapable of taking care of herself, and much more incapable of looking after a sprightly, dashing girl like her daughter, who was bent on marrying the first rich man she could catch. One might have supposed that the well-known folly and weakness of Mrs. O'Flaherty might have disarmed her detractors, or at least mitigated their censure. But such was not the case; for, had she possessed the wisdom of Solomon himself, and the prudence attributed to Penelope, she could not be more hardly judged than by those who pronounced her to be almost an idiot. Every error of omission or commission of which Honor was ever accused or suspected was now raked up from the stores of memory for the spiteful comments of those who had known her from her cradle. Each individual of her own sex declared that *she* had always foretold that no good could come to a girl who made fun of her acquaintance, quizzed their dresses and themselves, and walked about with gentlemen without a chaperone. The slight wounds sometimes unintentionally inflicted on her acquaintances by Honor were now all recalled to mind, and the unthinking girl found rigid censors

instead of good-natured excusers of her conduct in her neighbours. Some persons shook their heads and asserted that they "had reason to know that Mr. Hunter's intentions towards her had not been honourable." Others said that, if they had, there would be no reason for the elopement; and people "wondered how the Countess O'Neill, a woman so remarkable for decorum and high principle, should have taken Mrs. O'Flaherty to her house after the daughter of the latter had so terribly compromised herself." All, however, thought it right, as the Countess O'Neill received her, to call on Mrs. O'Flaherty to see how she bore it, "and to hear what she had to say;" but their curiosity was defeated by the Countess O'Neill's giving instructions to Patrick O'Donohough to admit no visitors except Lady Fitzgerald until further orders, an injunction to which he strictly attended. The family coach of Ballymacross Castle stopped at the door of Mrs. O'Flaherty the very day (the fourth from the elopement) on which the news reached there, and, the loud knocks of the footman bringing no one to open the door, a neighbour advanced to state that Mrs. O'Flaherty had removed to the Countess O'Neill's.

"Drive there immediately," said the mistress of the coach, with one of her most stately airs; and off drove the vehicle. This visit produced a certain effect on the minds of the good folk of —. "If Lady Fitzgerald and the Countess O'Neill evinced so warm an interest in Mrs. O'Flaherty, and paid her such marked attention in her troubles, other people must not have the appearance of neglecting her; and

if, after all, Honor O'Flaherty should return Mrs. Hunter, a rich woman, there would be no reason why she should not be well received, especially when it was seen that the tip-top people in the town and neighbourhood did not forsake her mother.

The length of Lady Fitzgerald's visit was remarked, and the inhabitants of the opposite house, who peered from behind the muslin curtains of their windows, declared that they saw Lady Fitzgerald embrace the distressed mother more than once in the Countess O'Neill's drawing-room, and hold her hand in hers for a considerable time.

While the elderly ladies were conversing together in the said drawing-room, the Misses Fitzgerald walked in the garden with Grace O'Neill. "What a painful event," remarked Miss Fitzgerald; "I really pity the poor mother."

"I must say I always thought Honor O'Flaherty a wild girl; but I never considered her a designing one before," added Miss Kate.

"We must not judge her too severely," observed Grace O'Neill, "for the poor girl had not the advantage that we have had in the care of a sensible and devoted mother; poor Mrs. O'Flaherty, though a very well-disposed person, being utterly incapable of taking a proper charge of so high-spirited and self-willed a girl as her daughter. Her helplessness, poor woman, entitles her to our pity; and Honor, too, with all her thoughtlessness, has a good heart. I trust her ill-advised *escapade* will turn out better than

might be expected, and that the large fortune of Mr. Hunter will gain her a respectable position."

"I hope so, too, though I confess I was hurt at finding her guilty of a falsehood, of which I had not thought her capable," said Miss Fitzgerald. "My mother, you are aware, wrote to your grandmother, dear Grace, to announce my engagement to Sir Henry Travers." Grace nodded assent. "And, would you believe it, when Miss White, the milliner, came to Ballymacross Castle the day before yesterday, with her stock of silks for me to select from, she positively told me that she was very glad my approaching marriage would disprove the foolish report circulated by Miss O'Flaherty, that she had recently refused an offer of the hand of Sir Henry Travers? Now this report is extremely annoying, and, being wholly untrue, must have originated with Honor. Indeed, Miss White said that one of the officers told her that Honor showed the letter of proposal to Mr. Hunter."

The lost letter of proposal for herself from the baronet instantly occurred to Grace, and now she remembered that she had left Honor in the room where the Countess O'Neill only a few minutes before had placed the letter, and whence it had disappeared. It was now clear *who* had taken it, and Grace felt a harsher sentiment towards Honor than she had ever previously experienced against any one. The meanness, the cunning, of surreptitiously obtaining the letter, and making use of it for her own purposes, was so unworthy, that she could not pass over it; but she nevertheless had generosity and tact enough to conceal her thoughts on the

subject. "How ashamed she must feel," observed Miss Kate Fitzgerald, "when she returns here to find Florence Lady Travers!"

"And how confront Sir Henry after having so impertinently made use of his name?" remarked Miss Fitzgerald. "He was perfectly enraged when I told him the report. 'What!' said he, 'could people be such fools as to credit such a thing for a moment? A girl I always particularly disliked! A creature full of levity, and so addicted to the low, vulgar habit of mimicking and quizzing! I would just as soon have thought of marrying one of the strolling actresses belonging to the company who acted here last year!'"

"That was going a little too far," observed Miss Kate; "for, after all, Honor O'Flaherty is of a very old and respectable family."

"A person who does not respect herself cannot expect others to respect her," said the future Lady Travers sententiously, and with an air of great dignity; "and, with Sir Henry's extreme delicacy of taste, one cannot wonder that he should feel greatly hurt at being even suspected of a preference for such a girl. Indeed he has assured me that, until his attachment for me, which I now find has been of long date, he never dreamt of marriage; a proof of his fastidiousness peculiarly gratifying to me, as I should extremely dislike marrying a man who had been rejected by any other person."

Grace O'Neill was disposed to smile, but she checked the

inclination, and a summons from Lady Fitzgerald for her daughters to join her called them away.

"I must claim you, dear Grace, as one of my bride-maids," said Miss Fitzgerald; "and I hope you will be a frequent, as I know you will be a welcome, guest at the hall."

Anxiously did the poor mother of Honor O'Flaherty count the hours until intelligence could reach her of the marriage of her daughter. "Oh!" would she exclaim to herself in the silence of night, when sleep fled from her pillow, "if *he* should prove a deceiver, and not marry my poor Honor! I try to keep up my spirits before the countess and her good granddaughter, as if I had no doubt at all about the marriage, for I'd be ashamed to show them my fears, or my trouble, because it would make 'em more angry against Honor; but, while I'm endeavouring to seem calm and easy, I'm on thorns for my poor child; — not that I doubt her virtue, no, God be thanked! *that* bitter thought hasn't pierced my heart; but what I do fear is, that Mr. Hunter, seeing how she deceived me, her doting mother, and made herself so cheap as to elope with him, careless of her good name, may reflect on all this, and refuse to marry her. Such things have happened, and men have been base enough, before now, to refuse to fulfil their engagements with the unhappy girls who trusted them! Who would believe Honor's innocence if she came back unmarried? No one but her poor heart-broken mother! But Honor never would come back if she did not return a wife!

Her pride would make her prefer death! Oh! my child, my child! how could you bring such misery on me as I have endured the last four days!"

Fortunately for the reason and, perhaps, for the life of Mrs. O'Flaherty, a letter from Honor to her mother arrived, announcing that she was now Mrs. James Hunter. The tone of the letter betrayed none of the triumphant exultation that might have been expected from the writer at the crowning of the scheme for which she had taken such pains and so compromised her dignity, while the affectionate feeling expressed towards her mother spoke in her favour. Perhaps it is one of the punishments allotted to the accomplishment of all schemes unworthily attained, that, however successful, something seems wanting to complete the happiness anticipated from them. To become the wife of the rich Mr. Hunter appeared to Honor O'Flaherty, a few weeks before, the object of all her aims and wishes; and, now this point was gained, she felt little elated, for conscience told her this good, if good indeed it might be deemed, had been achieved by deceptive appearances of attachment on her side, and by unworthy falsehoods. Something of this heaviness of heart breathed in her letter, and, as her mother read it over and over again, she became sensible of it.

"One might think, Judy," said she, after having read it aloud to her servant, "that my darling wasn't so overjoyed as I thought she would be when her marriage was over."

"Perhaps so, Ma'am; but shure it 's like most other things. When we have been expecting great pleasure from 'em for a long time, they come, and we find they 're not at all such fine things as we thought they 'd be. Shure isn't there myself: I was longing to have the gown I bought last year. Every time I passed the shop window where it was laid I used to say to myself, 'There it is, how happy I'd be if I had it;' and at last when I bought it — would you believe it, Ma'am? — after three days I thought to myself, 'Well, if I had my money back, I wouldn't buy this same gown, for it does not at all give me the satisfaction I looked for.'"

The letter was shown to the Countess O'Neill, who was heartily glad that the marriage had taken place, and warmly congratulated Mrs. O'Flaherty. "A weight of fear and shame is removed from my heart," said the latter; "but the pride I always expected to feel whenever my daughter made a good match is quite poisoned by the thought of *how* it was done, and the dread that her husband may undervalue her hereafter, if not now, for having eloped with him. I'm not a clever woman, nor an experienced one, countess, but I know that the man for whom a woman takes a false step is generally the first person to despise her for it. But I'll pray night and day for the Almighty in His mercy to look down upon my poor erring child, and to put it into her heart to atone for the false step she has made, by steadiness and good conduct for the future; and who knows but He who scorns not the

prayers of the most humble and ignorant may grant mine? To see Honor a good wife and mother, respected by her husband and his family, would best console me for what has happened, and heal the wound in my heart."

It is seldom that the monotony of a country town is enlivened in one week by the stirring incidents of "An approaching marriage in high life," and "An elopement in the fashionable world," as the London papers have it. This, however, occurred; and proportionably great was the sensation the news excited. If the announcement of the approaching nuptials of Sir Henry Travers, Bart., of "The Hall," with the lovely, amiable, and accomplished daughter of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald (for ladies on the eve of marriage are invariably pronounced, by the newspapers, at least, to be lovely, amiable, or accomplished, and sometimes all these, however different they may happen to be in their qualities) occasioned general surprise, what was the astonishment created two days after by the intelligence of the elopement of the rich Mr. Hunter and the handsome Miss O'Flaherty? Gay, coquettish, and giddy as Honor was known to be, she had been considered too wise — that is to say, too worldly-minded — however anxious to secure a husband, to take so bold and unusual a step as an elopement to achieve her project. Folks marvelled, shook their heads, made various prophecies on the probable and improbable results of such a proceeding, *hoped* she might not have cause to rue it, but *feared* she should. The fact related by the individual who had met the fair Honor and

Mr. Hunter on the road, that they were accompanied by a female, was accepted as *une circonstance atténuante* in the crime against propriety committed by Honor, and wagers ran high, and odds, in sporting phraseology, were given and taken, as to the chances for or against Mr. Hunter's marrying her. People seemed to calculate more on Honor's own resolution and spirit for having the hymeneal knot securely tied than on Mr. Hunter's sense of honour; and while, as has been already stated, Mrs. O'Flaherty and her faithful *suivante* Judy were safely lodged beneath the hospitable roof of the Countess O'Neill, her daughter's *escapade* furnished the sole topic of conversation, throwing into shade the approaching nuptials of Sir Henry Travers and Miss Fitzgerald, which, without the elopement, would have set all tongues wagging. Nothing is so vexatious for persons who like to occupy public attention — and such fools are not rare — as at the very moment they announce some event connected with themselves which they hope will make a great sensation, to have something still more stirring start up and supersede that which they furnished. Sir Henry Travers and the Fitzgeralds felt this vexatious *contretemps*, and it influenced not a little the severity of their strictures on Honor's conduct. Nevertheless, their annoyance did not prevent the ladies of Ballymacross Castle, as we have shown elsewhere, from hastening to condole with the distressed mother, and to obtain all the intelligence they could of the elopement. A few days following, a letter from Mrs. James Hunter announced to her mother that her marriage had been

solemnized, with all due ceremony, in London, in the presence of the parents of her husband, beneath whose roof she was now residing, and from whom she experienced every kindness and attention. The satisfaction of Mrs. O'Flaherty could only be equalled by that of the faithful Judy; and so wholly was she engrossed by these good tidings that the announcement contained in the letter, of a case of wedding gifts having been despatched from London for her, was wholly overlooked, until the third or fourth perusal of the letter, when, grown more calm and collected, it was noticed. The case soon after arrived, laden with costly presents. Nor was Judy forgotten; for a bonnet, cloak, and two silk gowns, fit, as Judy declared, "for the Lady Lieutenant herself," were addressed to her. A bank post-bill for a larger amount than Mrs. O'Flaherty had ever dreamt of possessing accompanied the other gifts, and with it was folded up a certificate of the English marriage of her daughter, witnessed by Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, sen. — a document infinitely more prized by her than the money. "Now, now, I can sleep once more," said she, "if, indeed, joy and gratitude to God will let me."

CHAPTER XXIX.

JUDY, having unpacked the case and exhibited its valuable contents to her mistress, observed, "Why, Ma'am, you don't seem half so pleased as I expected at getting such elegant presents. I'd lay a wager there's not in all

Ireland any lady that has anything to compare with them."

"Ah! Judy, I am thinking of my darling, and not of her gifts. I'd rather have one look at her than all the presents in the world."

"Faith, I believe you, Ma'am; for though I was never a mother myself, seeing I was never married, I can guess what a mother's feelings must be when she receives such presents and elegant letters from a daughter married to a rich gentleman like Mr. Hunter; God bless him, and long may he live to reign over her, though, unless she greatly changes, I think it's her that will reign over him; for she was always given to take her own way, and shure hasn't everything proved she has a good head of her own?"

"Oh! Judy, I'm too, too happy," and here Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears began to flow; "and I can't help thinking that if her poor de-a-r fa-th-er was alive — Oh! oh!"

"Shure, Ma'am, he's better off in heaven, and it's sinful for you to be wishing him back on earth."

"True for you, Judy, but I forget it."

"I'm thinking it is he that would soon make you wish him back in heaven, Ma'am, if he could just spend one evening with you."

The English newspapers gave the particulars of the marriage of "James Hunter, Esq., only son of James Hunter, Esq., of Grosvenor-square, and of Wintern Abbey and Allerton-park, in Derbyshire, to Miss O'Flaherty, a young Irish lady of distinguished family, and of great per-

sonal beauty and accomplishments," without omitting a single detail of the ceremony having been performed by an archbishop, and in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, sen., who had presented the fair bride with the most splendid gifts on the occasion. The Irish papers copied the paragraph, so that the topic was kept up a considerable time, and quite eclipsed the coming nuptials of Sir Henry Travers in the minds of the inhabitants of — and its neighbourhood. Nor was Judy inactive in extending the news of the costly gifts sent to her mistress and to herself. She visited all her acquaintances — a numerous circle — to whom she related, with undissembled pleasure and unrepressed triumph, the magnificence of the articles contained in the large case that had arrived from London. "I'll say nothing of the money that has come," said she, "except that if my mistress wished to demean herself by setting up a bank, she might do so now, to my certain knowledge. There's no end to the riches of the family Miss Honor has married into: they might walk on gould if they pleased. The Lord Lieutenant himself has not so great a fortune, and I've been told they mean to pay the national debt just for the honour of England. They are as proud as peacocks, as well they may be, to have the honour of receiving into their family a lady of such good blood as Miss Honor, or Mrs. James Hunter, as she is now. What do you think of her sending me ten guineas — besides two gowns, a cloak, and a bonnet fit for any lady in the land?"

him as she had done before their suspension; for it betrayed that her pride, and, perhaps, a more tender sentiment, dictated the change. He found many excuses for the frequency of his visits — for when were excuses ever wanting when people wish to follow their inclinations? To bring the Countess O'Neill an English newspaper, to lend her a book, to show her some sketches, always presented occasions for a call; and, although he went determined that its duration should not exceed half an hour, double and treble that time often glided away, and so pleasantly that none of the trio present discovered, or at least referred to the circumstance. He even obtained permission from the Countess O'Neill to come sometimes to drink tea and read aloud to her and Grace, and, after ten days, this *sometimes* extended to almost every evening. Mordant was an admirable reader; his voice was clear and harmonious, its inflection peculiarly just, and the countess, who liked being read to, fancied that she never understood an author so well as when Mordant gave a voice to his sentiments. Grace was ready to acknowledge the same; but she did not, however; for, true to her resolve, *she* never uttered a word to him that could be construed into a compliment; but, when some fine passage occurred in the book, to which Mordant gave due emphasis, he would glance at her, and a bright blush would instantly overspread her lovely cheeks. Often did Grace reflect on the disagreeableness of a habit of blushing, and wish it could be subdued; for it might, she feared, give rise to the most false conclusions, while

and Judy shared a due portion of the consideration accorded to her mistress. Frequent letters, and almost as frequent gifts, proved that riches had not corrupted the heart of Honor, nor caused her to forget her mother; and pleased were they who, through the medium of Judy, could get a view of the presents, and hear the marvellous descriptions of the wealth and grandeur of the Hunter family.

"Shure aren't the half of 'em half dead with envy and jealousy," observed Judy to Mr. Patrick O'Donohough. "It does my heart good to see how they wince when I tell 'em things; and as for that baste, Biddy White (I'll not put a miss before the name of the crathur), I'm certain she hasn't made a good meal, nor had a good night's sleep, ever since she heard of the great match Miss Honor has made."

"In your place, Mrs. Judy," said Patrick, "I'd let the subject drop. I'd appear to think that it was quite natural that your young lady should have married a rich gentleman, and that it was equally so that she should send costly gifts to her mother."

"Arrah, Mr. Patrick, you don't know how many slights and affronts I've had to put up with from these same envious, spiteful people, nor what a comfort it is to me to vex 'em now, by throwing Miss Honor's good fortune into their teeth. If I wasn't to talk to 'em about it, *they'd* never say a word on the subject, and then I wouldn't have the pleasure of seeing how angry and sore they are."

When Miss White exhibited the dresses to all invited to inspect them, and expected nothing but praises, she was met by cold looks and shakes of the head, followed by "Ah! if you could see the gowns, the laces, the shawls; and elegant lace caps, *real* Mechlin and point lace for the evening, and the finest Valenciennes for the morning, sent to Mrs. O'Flaherty, you would think nothing of these," was the observation that met her ear from every female frequenter of her shop; so that the exhibition of the *trousseau*, from which the cross milliner anticipated cause for triumph, proved only a source of mortification to her.

The impetus given to the gossip of — by Mrs. James Hunter's marriage, riches, and splendid gifts was such, that the officers of the — Regiment began to feel alarmed lest they, too, might be surprised into sudden marriages with some of the *naïve belles*, with whom, however pleasant it might be deemed by them to walk, ride, dance, and flirt, they felt no desire to wed; for, as more than one of these gentlemen observed, "choosing a partner for a ball and a partner for life were two very different things: the qualities which peculiarly fitted a young lady for the first not being always accompanied by those grave ones which were so essential in the second." And each, and all, Mordant alone excepted, determined henceforth to use more circumspection in their flirtations. Mordant, the prudent Mordant, could not resist the attraction that drew him twice or thrice a week, and would, had he not made a desperate effort, have drawn him every day, to the

Countess O'Neill's, believing that in going *only* thrice a week he evinced such a wonderful degree of self-control that his prudence could not be called in question. How could he leave off going, when Patrick O'Donohough, generally reserved and stately, allowed his mouth to relax into a broad smile of welcome whenever he opened the hall-door to him? When the Countess O'Neill, in a tone of pleasure that proved her sincerity, declared she "was glad to see him?" and when, though last, not least, the beautiful Grace blushed a rosy red when he entered the room? It was true that, in fulfilment of her vow to show him that her heart was not *wholly* his; as she feared he might have imagined, she let her eyelids drop when he appeared, and carefully refrained from extending her hand to welcome his approach, marks of reserve that had not escaped his observation. But drooping eyelids do not always indicate indifference, nor the avoidance of shaking hands coldness; and, even if they did, that rosy blush would have induced him to give them an interpretation more favourable to his wishes; and so he continued his visits, leaving to Grace the proud consciousness that he could not now flatter himself into a belief that he was beloved. Dear, beautiful, simple Grace, how little versed was she in the secrets of the heart of man! how little aware that the very means she had, in the artlessness of her nature, adopted to deceive Mordant as to the real state of her feelings revealed them to him more fully than had she continued, on the renewal of his visits, to treat

him as she had done before their suspension; for it betrayed that her pride, and, perhaps, a more tender sentiment, dictated the change. He found many excuses for the frequency of his visits — for when were excuses ever wanting when people wish to follow their inclinations? To bring the Countess O'Neill an English newspaper, to lend her a book, to show her some sketches, always presented occasions for a call; and, although he went determined that its duration should not exceed half an hour, double and treble that time often glided away, and so pleasantly that none of the trio present discovered, or at least referred to the circumstance. He even obtained permission from the Countess O'Neill to come sometimes to drink tea and read aloud to her and Grace, and, after ten days, this *sometimes* extended to almost every evening. Mordant was an admirable reader; his voice was clear and harmonious, its inflection peculiarly just, and the countess, who liked being read to, fancied that she never understood an author so well as when Mordant gave a voice to his sentiments. Grace was ready to acknowledge the same; but she did not, however; for, true to her resolve, *she* never uttered a word to him that could be construed into a compliment; but, when some fine passage occurred in the book, to which Mordant gave due emphasis, he would glance at her, and a bright blush would instantly overspread her lovely cheeks. Often did Grace reflect on the disagreeableness of a habit of blushing, and wish it could be subdued; for it might, she feared, give rise to the most false conclusions, while

Mordant thought that, among all the charms with which women are endowed to captivate the heart of man, a blush is the most irresistible, and he would not have Grace lose this charm for worlds. Never more did Mordant dare to question his reason on the probable result of the dangerous pleasure in which he was daily indulging, by thus habituating himself to the society of so captivating a creature as Grace O'Neill. He was in a delirium of happiness, from which he dreaded to awake; and he abandoned himself to its enjoyment as the unhappy do to a delicious dream, in which they believe themselves happy, yet still possess a half-consciousness that were they to awake all would fade away, and to tremble lest their dream should be broken. Mordant, in truth, found no time for painful reflections. He had to take books, newspapers, or sketches to the Countess O'Neill every day; he had to read to her every evening; and his military duties occupied all the time that was not devoted to the countess and her granddaughter. He trembled at the thought that, some day or other, an order for his regiment to leave — might arrive, and destroy his present happiness; but the thought was too painful to be indulged without making him wretched, and so, like many other men under similar circumstances, he banished it from his mind, determined to forget the menacing future in the blissful present. From this dream-like happiness he was awoken by a letter from his mother. Her letters, like those of other persons dear to him, used formerly to afford him pleasure; but, since his passion for Grace, they had not



only ceased to do so, but the mere sight of one of these epistles gave him a presentiment of evil.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FEW lines from Herbert Vernon brought Mordant to his room the day after the rejection of his proposal to Miss O'Neill. "Well, my dear friend," said Vernon, "you see before you an unhappy, though I can hardly call myself a disappointed, man, as the lovely Grace certainly never gave me any encouragement. I have received a civil but very positive refusal — one that precludes any future reference to the subject. There, read the letter, Mordant;" and he handed it to his friend. "Nothing now remains but for you to propose. You, I am well convinced, have no refusal to dread."

"Were I even certain of success, Vernon, which is far, very far from being the case, my position prevents my seeking Miss O'Neill's hand."

"Why not accept my offer, Mordant? Why allow a sentiment of false pride to prompt you to refuse from a friend, who loves you as a brother, the means of securing your own happiness and that of one of the most charming girls in the world?"

"Be assured, my dear Vernon, I am deeply sensible of all your generous kindness; but I cannot bring myself to accept it. Many reasons, exclusive of pride, render it impossible."

"Then you don't love this beautiful girl as I thought you did, and as she deserves to be loved?" said Vernon, almost angrily.

"You are wrong, indeed you are, Vernon. But let us talk on this subject no more."

"Promise me one thing, however, Mordant. Renew your visits to the Countess O'Neill, and if you find her lovely granddaughter betrays a preference for you, which you may discover by various ways, I will still hope you may avail yourself of my offer. You have generously, nobly, my dear Mordant, withdrawn from the competition, and left the field open to your unfortunate friend. I never can forget this as long as I live; and, my own happiness being now wholly out of the question, the first wish of my heart is to secure yours and hers."

"A compliance with your request, Vernon, will expose me to certain danger, and it would be more prudent for me to decline it. Nevertheless I will do as you wish. I will renew my visits to the countess and her granddaughter, and I hope I have sufficient self-control to resist the temptation of making myself an interest in the heart of this charming girl."

"For my part, I shall get leave of absence and go to England. Change of scene, and the society of my family, may do me good. Here I could not stay, in the present state of my feelings."

Herbert Vernon applied for leave of absence, and obtained it, and a few days after set out for England; not,



however, without taking leave of the Countess O'Neill, who received him alone, her granddaughter having declined an interview. The following day Mordant paid a visit to the countess. The face of Patrick O'Donohough brightened up with pleasure as he opened the door to admit him; and, when he announced the name of the visitor, the face of Grace O'Neill might have revealed to the most indifferent spectator that she took no common interest in him. And yet there was a degree of reserve in her manner, too, which denoted that she was not quite at her ease. She never referred to the lengthened cessation of Mordant's visits; for Grace O'Neill, with all her gentleness and amiability, had a proud spirit, and, whatever might have been the cause of his long absence from her grandmother's house, she thought it befitting her dignity not to appear to notice it, and treated him as if his visits had never been discontinued, except with somewhat more ceremony than when they were frequent. Mordant thought her, if possible, more lovely than ever; and she certainly did look very beautiful, the heightened colour of her delicate cheeks, caused by his unexpected presence, giving additional lustre to her eyes, and animation to her countenance. The Countess O'Neill, with her usual good nature, remarked that it was a long time since she had seen him; a remark which made Grace bite her lip, and blush afresh, so desirous was she that *he* might not suppose that his absence had been regretted.

"I am sorry we have lost Mr. Vernon," said the countess,

"for he is a very amiable young man, and used often to come and see us."

"He is one of the most excellent young men in the world," replied Mordant, "and the more he is known the better must he be liked."

"You have been friends from your boyhood, I understand," observed the Countess O'Neill."

"Yes, the most intimate and attached friends. I love Vernon as a brother," replied Mordant; "and he, I assure you, reciprocates the sentiment."

Grace O'Neill took no part in the conversation while it referred to Mr. Herbert Vernon. It was evidently distasteful to her, as was revealed, not only by her silence, but by a slight movement of her under lip peculiar to her when not pleased, and which Mordant, with the quickness of perception which is said to appertain to a lover, had on their first acquaintance remarked. When the subject changed, Grace took part in it; but when Mordant arose to depart, and the Countess O'Neill expressed a hope that he would not again remain so long without coming to see them, she abstained from joining in it, and resumed the somewhat stately reserve which had marked her manner on his arrival. Nothing of this was lost on Mordant; and he, naturally of a proud and reserved nature, valued the object of his affection still more when he saw these proofs of her feminine delicacy and self-respect. Did women know how they raise themselves in the estimation of all right-thinking men by never descending from the modest dignity which

ought ever to be one of the peculiar attributes of the sex, they would never forget what is due to themselves, and keep men continually in mind of it by their manner.

"I thought Captain Mordant looking rather ill," observed the Countess O'Neill; "perhaps the Irish air does not agree with him."

"It did not strike me," replied her granddaughter.

The truth was, Grace scarcely looked at Captain Mordant, for, conscious that she felt more than a common interest in him, she was fearful of betraying it by meeting his eye.

"How warmly he spoke of his friend Mr. Vernon! Ah! Grace, perhaps if you had not so promptly and decidedly refused that amiable young man his merits might, in time, have won your regard."

"Never, dearest grandmother. I felt from the first of our acquaintance that I never should like him, and his persistence in his attentions and ultimate proposal, when he must, unless, indeed, he is a very vain man, have seen that I offered him no encouragement, was not calculated to win my esteem."

"You judge him severely, Grace. May you not attribute this persistence for which you censure him to the profound sentiment you had created in his breast?"

"No, grandmamma. I think a man who thus perseveres without encouragement must have a very poor opinion of her he seeks for a wife, or a very high one of himself."

"I hope, Grace, you will not always be so fastidious.

This was the second proposal of marriage you have rejected, and, as the first wish of my heart is to see you happily established in life before I die, how is this to be accomplished if you reject all your suitors?"

"Surely you would not, dearest grandmother, have wished me to accept Sir Henry Travers? A man so weak in intellect, so every way commonplace and uninteresting, with no recommendation that ever I could discover except his 'rent-roll,' 'the hall,' and 'his late mother's diamonds,' to which he so often refers with such complacency; and, though these may be very attractive to other girls, they never could be to me."

"And, thinking so, I never said a word in his favour, nor offered any obstacle to your prompt rejection of him. But with Mr. Herbert Vernon it was different, Grace. Nobly born, rich, good-looking, well educated, and agreeable, I could really find no reason why any young woman with a disengaged heart could refuse so eligible a suitor."

The word *disengaged* seemed to Grace to be uttered with a peculiar emphasis, and it called a deep blush to her cheeks. She, however, rallied her courage, and, assuming an appearance of indifference which she was far from feeling, observed that "she had always imagined that no girl ought to accept a man, however eligible, for whom she entertained no preference."

The Countess O'Neill dropped the subject, but she felt more convinced than ever that, had her granddaughter never known Captain Mordant, she might not have been

so insensible to the merits of his friend Mr. Herbert Vernon, and might have formed a marriage that would have quieted her own mind for the happiness of Grace when she should be no more. Without any relatives to whose guardianship or care she could confide her beloved granddaughter, she trembled at the thought of leaving her unprotected, when death should take herself from earth. This thought pressed heavily on the mind of the countess, and believing that, had Captain Mordant entertained any intention of paying his addresses to Grace, he would not have withdrawn and left the field open to Mr. Herbert Vernon, she experienced great uneasiness lest the preference which she had a secret conviction Mordant had excited in her granddaughter's breast might for ever preclude her from accepting any offers, however suitable, from others, and so defeat her own hopes of seeing her established in life. "And yet I am sure Mordant loves her," thought the countess. "A thousand little circumstances which I have remarked prove it. Why, then, has he so long abstained from coming here; and why renew his visits when his friend departed? Perhaps he believes Grace poor and dependent, and being himself but a younger son, with the small pittance generally the portion of *cadets de famille*, dreads to involve her in poverty, and perhaps, also, fears to incur the anger of his parents by wedding a girl without fortune. But, happily, Grace, though not a rich heiress, is, Heaven be thanked, far removed from the probability of want; and, did Captain Mordant know this

fact, it might remove the sole obstacle to his seeking the hand I would so willingly confide to him. Not that I think him in the least a mercenary man, but that I believe him too noble-minded to think of plunging the woman he loves in poverty. Hitherto I have carefully concealed that Grace will have a comfortable independence, in order to screen her from the addresses of some of her fortune-hunting countrymen; but now I wish I had been less reserved, for Grace is much too fastidious in her taste to be exposed to any danger by their addresses; and, as all such matters are talked of, Captain Mordant might have heard it without my being compelled to touch on the subject, which would be awkward and embarrassing in the extreme."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of the Countess O'Neill, her granddaughter's thoughts were occupied with the unexpected visit of Mordant. Why had he remained so long absent, and why had he now come? were questions which presented themselves to her. "Perhaps," thought Grace, "he only come to plead the cause of his friend Mr. Herbert Vernon by his extravagant eulogiums. He may spare himself the trouble, however, for I shall never be talked into a liking for that gentleman. Could it be possible that Mordant stayed away lest his presence might prevent Mr. Vernon's attentions being well received?" A burning blush of wounded pride and modesty dyed her cheeks as the possibility of the truth of this hypothesis occurred to her; for it argued that Mordant must, in that case, have suspected her partiality for him,

and wished his friend to gain her hand. "He shall find that he was mistaken," thought Grace, all the pride of her nature rushing to her aid. "Never shall he have reason to believe that I have bestowed my heart unsought. I would die sooner than he should think so, and will leave nothing undone to remove such an impression from his mind. Ungenerous and vain man, first to pay me a thousand nameless attentions, which, although no word of positive love was spoken, must have led any one to believe the passion was felt, and, when he had awakened an interest too deep for my peace, he withdraws to give place to the attentions of another, and now comes to repeat his praises. This is a cruel mockery, a trifling with my feelings unworthy of Mordant; but I will school myself into coldness; I will tear his image from my heart, even though that heart should bleed, should break; and he shall learn to know that I am not one to love one whom I can no longer esteem." A passionate burst of tears followed this stern resolve, and denoted that it could not be carried out without many a pang to her who formed it. Love is said to create a perfect sympathy between lovers; but, alas! were this the case, how could they suffer from the endless and torturing doubts and fears, from which lovers are seldom exempt? A stronger proof of this want of sympathy could hardly be given than on this occasion, when, while Mordant felt more in love than ever after the interview with Grace O'Neill, she, offended and angry, accused him of want of affection, and of trifling with her feelings --

offences for which she was determined to punish him by carefully concealing how well she had once liked him. And did she no longer like him? Her heart might have whispered "Yes," had she probed it more profoundly; but "the still small voice" of the heart, like that of conscience, sometimes is not heard, when pride and anger quell its sounds. Could Grace O'Neill have beheld Mordant when he entered his room, and, flinging himself into a chair, sighed deeply, and exclaimed, "Yes, loveliest of your sex! you, and you only, have ever touched my heart! — how different, how all-absorbing is the sentiment you have awakened in this breast, to the fancied, but ephemeral, passions inspired in it by other women!" — she would not have blamed Mordant, nor doubted the sincerity of his affection; nor would she have passed a sleepless night on that which followed their interview, notwithstanding that speeches similar to that which he uttered are often used by men when they apostrophize a new though not perhaps a last flame!

CHAPTER XXXI.

WE left Mordant gazing with a presentiment of evil on a letter received from his mother.

Who has *not* experienced something of this presentiment, when wholly engrossed by one feeling, one passion, he receives letters from those who have claims on his affection and consideration which he cannot throw off, but who, ignorant of or even inimical to the new tie the heart has formed, breaks in with old associations on the newer and more valued ones! To peruse letters under such circumstances seems like an infidelity to the beloved, all referring to periods or events when this dear one was unknown and had no influence over his destiny! Mordant had experienced this feeling for some time, and often had he wished that his friends in England were less punctual correspondents. He was half-tempted to leave the letter unread until the morrow; but, on reflection, "It is better to have it over at once," thought Mordant; and he began its perusal. After some reproaches for the brevity and infrequency of his letters, Lady Fitzmordant wrote: "I should have been uneasy about you, my dear Mordant, if I had not seen your friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, who said he left you in perfect health, and quite reconciled to your exile in Ireland. *He* is looking anything but well, and is in wretched spirits, the consequence, as his mother confided to me, of an unsuccessful passion for some Irish miss who has turned his head and refused his

hand. The thing appeared so utterly improbable to me that I could hardly credit it; but poor Lady Melboro, with tears in her eyes, vouched for the fact, and (would you believe it?) regretted that this Hibernian Venus — for such Herbert Vernon swears she is — had not consented to become his wife! Really the weakness of some parents is *incroyable, n'est ce pas?* 'She must be such a charming person,' said Lady Melboro, poor credulous woman, taking for granted that the exaggerated description of a young man in love may be relied on; while I, who am not so easily imposed on, feel sure this Miss O'Neill, a descendant of some Irish barbaric king, as your poor friend has been persuaded into believing, is nothing more than a wild Irish girl with a pretty face, thick ankles, large feet, and a *brogue*, which last is, above all things on earth, my aversion. Only fancy such a person the future mistress of Melboro Castle, Vernon Abbey, and the fine mansion in Grosvenor-square! Yet all this the wild Irish girl has refused, which proves that she must be sadly in want of common sense. Take care, my dear Mordant, that you do not become infatuated with any of these Hibernian sirens; for I give you timely notice that neither your father nor I are at all disposed to follow the foolish example of Lord and Lady Melboro, by being ready to receive as a daughter any one of those fair Milesians whom you might choose to present to us. Even an Irish heiress, if there really be such a *rara avis*, would be extremely objectionable; for Lord Fitzmordant and I have a horror of the

Irish. Judge, then, of our unconquerable objection to a portionless daughter-in-law from the Emerald Isle, and keep your heart safe."

Every line of this passage jarred the feelings of Mordant, and impaired his affection for his mother. How contemptible and illiberal did her sentiments appear! He was wounded to the heart, that the lovely, the refined, and pure-minded Grace should be exposed to such contumely; but, like all injudicious interference, this only led to an increase of love and respect for her on whom his worldly-minded mother's sarcasms had been levelled. "And I could blind myself to all this," said Mordant, "could go on from day to day, increasing my own mad passion for this charming creature, and endeavouring to excite one in her pure heart for me, careless of the consequences it might entail on both, and selfishly thoughtless of all but my own gratification! How weak, how contemptible do I appear in my own eyes; how unworthy must my conduct appear in hers! All this I might have anticipated, I must have known, had I allowed the dictates of reason to be heard. But, no; weak and vacillating, I followed only the counsel of my own treacherous heart, at the risk of compromising her peace. What course shall I now adopt? Shall I fly from her presence without any explanation, and leave her to condemn — to hate me? And yet, if I adopt another course — if I tell her grandmother that I go because I love Grace too well, and must not solicit the hand I do to possess — may I not offend? Dare I, however guarded

the expressions, reveal to a proud, sensitive, and noble-minded woman like the Countess O'Neill that my family, on whom, alas! I am dependent, would never receive as a daughter her matchless Grace, whom any family might be proud to welcome? This must not be. She might well tell me that I should have thought of all this before I attempted to create an interest in the heart of her granddaughter, and she would be justified; for although I have breathed no declaration of love, offered up no vows, my whole conduct, ever since I resumed my visits, must have prepared both the countess and Grace for an avowal of my attachment. From what a dream of happiness has my mother's cruel letter awoke me! Would it had not come, and that I might have continued still longer to cheat myself with hope. Hope! and of what? Unstable and narrow as the basis may be on which Hope sometimes makes a stand, I could not blind myself to the fact that my position offered not even a point for the delusive siren to alight on. A younger son, with only a scanty pittance, and with parents so deeply embarrassed in their affairs as to have been compelled to have had frequent recourse to my brother's generosity, I have nothing to hope. Heaven forbid I should ever be so lost to brotherly feeling as to calculate on the probability which dear Mordant's delicate health might hold out of my succeeding him. No; never may I lose my dear, kind brother! It is true he is rich, and well do I know how gladly he would help to better my fortune, but he owes his wealth to his wife; and my

pride, my delicacy revolts from becoming a pensioner on her bounty, on which my mother has but too often trespassed. I know that my mother fully counts on my wedding some rich wife, a portion of whose fortune she expects will be appropriated to her wants, and that she is wholly indifferent to my happiness, or, rather, is perfectly convinced that wealth must ensure it! Then her illiberal antipathy to the Irish presents another obstacle! All — everything — conspires against my peace! There have been moments of late when I have deliberated on the generous proposal of Herbert Vernon, and felt inclined to accept it. When I refused it my pride was stronger than my love; but *now* love has mastered pride, and, to possess Grace, to what, short of dishonour, would I not stoop? But even were I to take advantage of my noble friend's offer, and, solicit the hand of Grace, would the Countess O'Neill, with her high and proper notions of what is due to my family and hers, accept my proposal unless sanctioned by my parents? Certainly not. She would instantly refer me to my father and mother, and, unless a letter from them sanctioned my proposal, would at once refuse it, indignant, perhaps, that I had exposed her granddaughter to being rejected by my family. Yes, this would inevitably be the case, and do I not know what the result of a reference to my family would be? Has not this heartless letter from my mother warned me?"

After two or three hours passed in painful reflection, through which no light vista for the future pierced, Mor-

dant arose from the sofa on which he had flung himself, determined on going to the Countess O'Neill's. "The hour has long passed," thought he, "at which they were accustomed to see me. They will wonder why I do not come; perhaps Grace may be uneasy. Yes, I will go, and at least enjoy a few more hours of happiness before I tear myself away from her whom I adore."

Let not my readers accuse Mordant of more weakness than falls to the generality of his sex. Many are those of it who have adopted the same conduct which he pursued on the present occasion; and many are those who will continue to do so, while men, selfishly, weakly consult the happiness of the moment, in preference to adopting that line of conduct which solid reason would prompt. Men are, like children, prone to seek pleasure, and desirous to leave to futurity the consequences of their supineness and self-indulgence.

When Mordant entered the drawing-room of the Countess O'Neill, who expressed the uneasiness his unusual protracted absence had occasioned her, and saw the bright blush of happiness mount on the cheek of Grace, he asked himself how he could ever summon sufficient resolution to tear himself from beings so dear to him, and to whom he had now so tenderly endeared himself; and he surrendered his whole heart, his whole thoughts, to the present enjoyment of their society — an enjoyment heightened by a sad presentiment that he could not long count on its duration. The Countess O'Neill had observed, with silent but heart-

felt satisfaction, the growing passion of Mordant for her granddaughter. His not avowing it was explained to her by his want of fortune, a fact to which he had frequently adverted in conversation, and also to her belief of his total ignorance that Grace would possess a dower amply sufficient for all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. The countess had formed a little romance in her own mind, which she hoped, ere long, to see put in action, and patiently awaited an occasion for the *dénouement*. She had seen enough of Mordant to be convinced that he was in every way worthy of the affection Grace had, unsolicited, bestowed on him. His domestic turn, his freedom from extravagant tastes — a freedom so rare in the highborn, habituated from infancy to luxury and grandeur — and the variety of his accomplishments, so demonstrative of settled habits of rational and elegant employment, satisfied her that her granddaughter's happiness would be safe in his keeping, and that her own would be secured by witnessing their union. She felt that, were she to share their home, her presence could be no drawback on their felicity, for she was sure that Mordant entertained for her a warm sentiment of regard and esteem. She reflected also that, by living with them, the whole of her income could be appropriated to the maintenance of their common establishment, which would greatly add to its comfort, while Grace and herself could be spared the pang of a separation. The desire of dwelling with the youthful pair was one of the strongest proofs that the Countess O'Neill could give

of the high estimation she had formed of Mordant, for hitherto, whenever she had contemplated the marriage of her granddaughter, although grieved by the anticipation of the parting it would necessitate, she had never for a moment counted on sparing herself this chagrin of a separation by consenting to take up her abode with her who formed all the comfort of her life. Now, however, when she had spent so many pleasant hours in the society of Mordant, when his taste for and his admirable manner of reading had become known to her, she wished nothing so much as to see him the husband of her dear Grace, and to form one of the members of his home. Never had she felt so much satisfaction in the contemplation of her easy fortune as now, when she viewed it as the means of removing the only obstacle which she thought could exist to the union of Mordant and Grace; and she longed, ardently longed, for an opportunity to let Mordant know the happiness in store for him. Proud and sensitive herself, she could fully comprehend how *he* must feel at the notion of asking the woman he loved to share his poverty, and even trembled lest his pride might prove an obstacle to his accepting the fortune she could bestow. But then came the thought that she could make him sacrifice this pride, if made to understand that the happiness of her he loved demanded it, and this task she would undertake. Never did it occur to the Countess O'Neill that any family, however noble, could object to receive her peerless granddaughter when assured that she possessed a handsome com-

petency; and, if such a thought had presented itself, she would have dismissed it with disdain, for the Countess O'Neill, the honoured widow of a man whose military achievements and high character had won the respect of Europe, had a just estimation of what was due to herself and the granddaughter of her chivalrous husband, and consequently believed that Grace must be welcomed into any family into which she married. Much less could the countess suppose that Grace's being Irish could be an objection. She would have smiled contemptuously had any one suggested such a supposition, thinking it too illiberal and narrow-minded to be possible.

Such was the state of her feelings while, day after day, she marked the growing devotion of Mordant to Grace, and saw the sparkling eye and blushing cheek which betrayed the delight his presence afforded to her darling. And nearly similar to the countess's feelings and projects were those which filled the heart and occupied the thoughts of the faithful Patrick O'Donohough. "That Captain Mordant loves her, there can be no more doubt than that sunshine gives warmth," said Patrick to himself. "I can read it in his face as plain as if it was printed in a book, and I can hear it in his voice. But why he doesn't speak out, and ease his heart, I can't guess. I know by his servant that he's not rich; on the contrary, that, as a younger brother, he has but little fortune; but sure *she* will have enough for both, ay, and to live like a real lady and gentleman, as they both are; and haven't I a good round sum,

principal and interest put together, to add to her fortune; for what have I been scraping and saving for so many years, but to give it to her? I like this same Captain Mordant. He reminds me of my noble master in many ways. I think there's always a certain resemblance between those of noble character — a something one can't exactly describe, but that one *feels*; and I've thought this ever since the first time I saw Captain Mordant. His servant, too, has such a profound respect for him. That's a good sign of a gentleman, for people may say what they like — ay, and even though I once read it in a book, 'that no man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*' — they'll never get me to believe it; for I know by experience that my noble master was just as great a hero in my eyes when I've handed him his dressing-gown and slippers, as when I girded on his sword when he was going into action, as many a time I did; and I could no more take the least liberty with him than I would with a king. Indeed, for the matter of that, I never felt such a deep sentiment of respect for the Emperor of Austria himself as I used to feel for the Count O'Neill; for I used to say to myself, one was born to greatness, and therefore has no such great merit of his own; but the other has made himself great. He had won renown in many a battle-field, and gained honour by his unflinching courage, his firm mind, and his high principles; and therefore I looked up to him with a kind of awe, that all his condescension and kindness could not shake off. I've tried all I can to let it be

known to Captain Mordant's servant that Miss O'Neill will have a nice fortune; but, Lord bless us! what's the use? *He* could no more take the liberty of touching on such a subject, or of even mentioning Miss O'Neill's name to his master, than I dared to do to mine. Captain Mordant, like the Count O'Neill, isn't a gentleman like some others, to let his servant gossip when he is dressing him; and faith he is right, for to take news from most servants' mouths is like taking water out of a soiled glass. How Miss Grace has recovered her spirits ever since Captain Mordant has renewed his visits! The red rose has come back to her cheeks, and the sunbeams to her eyes; and when I throw open the drawing-room door every day and say 'Captain Mordant,' both the cheeks and the eyes brighten up, and she looks more beautiful than ever. Oh! how she reminds me of her grandmother — ay, and of her dear mother, at such a moment! People may talk of the three Graces, and make a fuss about 'em, and fine young girls they looked to be in marble when I saw them in the Royal Gallery at Vienna, only I'd rather have seen them with decent clothes on their backs; but to my fancy the three Graces that I have seen, one after another, in this family, beat out all the other Graces in the world. How it pleases me to think that every day that passes over my head my little fortune is increasing by the interest, that it may be the better worth Miss O'Neill's acceptance. Sure 'every little makes a mickle,' as the old saying is. All I want now to make me happy is for the marriage to be settled, and never to

see Miss Grace look pale or anxious any more, nor her noble grandmother uneasy. I was sure from the beginning that Miss O'Neill wouldn't marry Mr. Vernon, for, though a fine young man, he is not to be compared to Captain Mordant. They are made of different clay as the old saying has it."

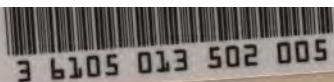
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